

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Reporter's notebook on
U.S. farmers trip to Cuba

— PAGE 9

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 64/NO. 11 MARCH 20, 2000

45,000 rally to defend affirmative action

Workers, students mobilize in Tallahassee March 7



Militant/Linda Joyce

Working people turned out in their thousands to oppose Governor Bush's executive order attacking affirmative action programs

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS
AND RACHELE FRUIT

TALLAHASSEE, Florida—In one of the largest protests ever in Florida, and in the South, more than 45,000 people marched to the state capitol here March 7 to defend affirmative action.

The bulk of the demonstrators were African-Americans. The majority were working people spanning many generations. Thousands of college students and smaller num-

Continued on Page 10

Youthful protest calls for U.S. Navy to leave Vieques

BY BROCK SATTER

GROTON, Connecticut—Three hundred people joined a demonstration here March 4 in front of the U.S. Naval base to demand

the Navy leave the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.

Car caravans from several cities in New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts converged here for the action. Speakers included members of Pro-Libertad, New York City Councilman Jose Rivera, and others. The protest was marked by the number of young people in attendance.

The U.S. government has used the island of Vieques for live-fire training of Naval forces since the Second World War, despite opposition from residents of the island. In addition to pushing out the population from two-thirds of the land, the livelihoods of local fisherman have been destroyed.

Puerto Ricans have organized large protests and land occupations following the killing of a worker at the base by an errant bomb. These actions led to Washington suspending the naval bombardment. A march of more than 80,000 people February 21 condemned a move by Washington, with support from the governor of Puerto Rico, to restart the U.S. Navy exercises.

"The U.S. government needs to respect human rights," said 18-year-old Patrick Sheenhan-Gauner, a member of Youth Peace. He came with eight others from Norwich, Connecticut, including two classmates at his high school.

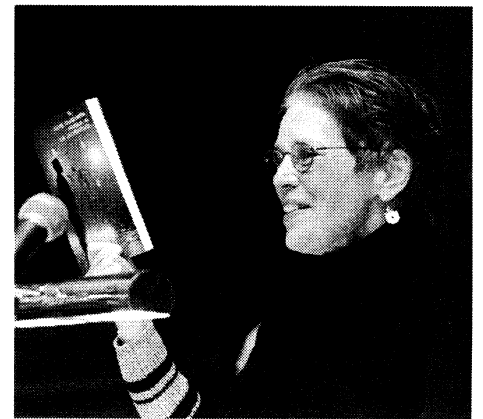
"Just living in this society, I am made to feel like an outsider," said Hiram Rivera, 23, a student at Southern Connecticut State in New Haven. "I'm proud to be Puerto Rican. When they celebrate independence day here, we are still a colony. Just like in Cuba, it's better to stand up now."

Angelixa Colon, 16, and Ann Adams, 15, Continued on Page 12

Socialists celebrate progress, new books

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

NEW YORK—"We are here to take part in a double celebration," said Jack Barnes to 200 people at a public meeting entitled "Reportback from Havana Book Fair; Building the Communist Movement," held here March 5. Barnes, who is the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, chaired the meeting and summarized its themes.



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Pathfinder president, Mary-Alice Waters holds *Che Guevara habla a la juventud* during reportback from the Havana International Book Fair and celebration of work to build communist movement.

Mary-Alice Waters, the editor of the English edition of *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces* and *Che Guevara Speaks*

Continued on Page 4

High school walkouts demand justice for Diallo

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

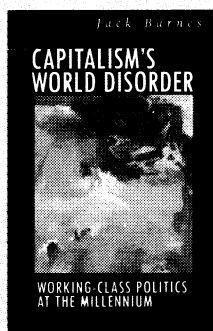
NEW YORK—High school students in the New York and New Jersey area took to the streets to express their outrage at the acquittal of the four cops who shot to death Amadou Diallo, a 22-year-old worker from Guinea.

Chanting "No Justice, No Peace," several hundred students walked out of classes March 3 at Stuyvesant High School and several others in New York City. They marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to a rally by the federal courthouse, where a jury was deliberating the fate of three cops accused of covering up the August 1997 police-station torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima. Three days later they were convicted.

After demonstrating in Brooklyn, about 300 students then marched back across the bridge for another protest action at City Hall.

The same day, some 120 students from Hunter High School marched from their school to a rally by Central Park. "No more killer cops," "Students Against Police Terror," and "Justice for Amadou," were among the signs the students carried on their 35-block march through the middle of Manhattan.

Hunter High student David Beck, 14, pointed to the cop killing of Malcolm Ferguson, a 23-year-old Black man, on March 1 just a few blocks away from where Continued on Page 4



Capitalism's World Disorder

WORKING-CLASS POLITICS AT THE MILLENNIUM

Jack Barnes

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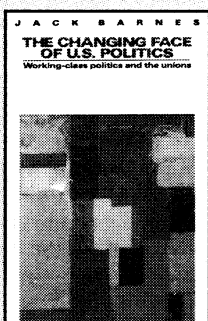
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'Militant' supporters prepare for subscription drive — page 5

Women fighters put their stamp on USWA conference

BY KRISTIN MERIAM

PITTSBURGH—The first steelworkers International Women's Conference here in early February was marked by women who are part of the struggles of working people across North America.

Hundreds of rank-and-file women attended the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) conference. Total participation was nearly 800, far more than the organizers had anticipated. Steelworkers came from almost every state, many parts of Canada, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In the call for the conference USWA president George Becker wrote that there would be no limit on the number of delegates a local could send and encouraged them to "seek out female members who reflect the diversity of our Union and composition of the locals and districts."

"USWA Women in Action—Solidarity and Leadership," was the official theme of the meeting, which included plenary sessions, workshops, and other events. Workshops included community and political action; pension, insurance and other benefits; addressing harassment issues inside the union; opportunities for organizing; balancing work and family; and health and safety issues.

Many workers involved in struggles against company lockouts placed their stamp on the conference, although they weren't on the official agenda. At least a dozen workers locked out by Kaiser Aluminum attended from Spokane and Tacoma, Washington. Also participating were a half-dozen locked-out AK Steel workers from Mansfield, Ohio, and a contingent of locked-out Scottsboro Aluminum workers from Scottsboro, Alabama.

The locked-out workers made a big effort to reach out to other conference participants to tell about their struggles and to raise funds. The Kaiser workers set up an information table in the room with the other display tables, where the union's political action committee, various districts, and oth-

ers were selling USWA merchandise and holding a raffle.

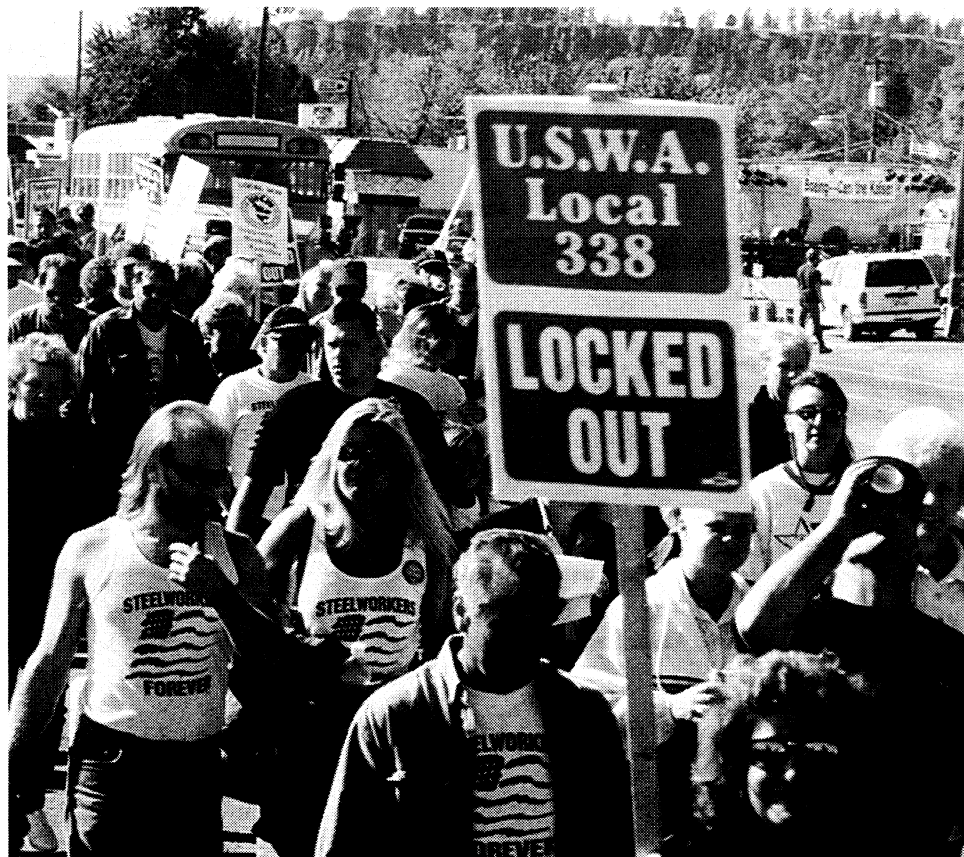
The Kaiser women also sold colorful Rosie the Riveter, "A woman's place is in her union," T-shirts, sweatshirts, and buttons out of their hotel room. They all were hot items, with many participants wearing them after the first day of the conference. The AK Steel women organized fund-raising in the hallways, selling "Stop AK Steel/Armco Lockout" buttons with a red stop sign logo. They raffled off some union jackets and a life-size soft sculpture woman clad in the familiar safety gear of a steelworker: hard hat, flame resistant green suit, and steel-toed boots. They held the raffle in their hotel room, raising about \$1,300.

A worker ran off a case of flyers for the March 25 rally in solidarity with the AK Steelworkers in Mansfield in order to put one on each seat in the Grand Ballroom where the plenary sessions were held.

'Education of a lifetime'

When the locked-out workers from Kaiser, AK Steel, and Scottsboro were introduced at the banquet, they received an ovation from the gathered workers. The table of miners from the Iron Range and southern Wyoming responded most enthusiastically, leaping to their feet with fists in the air. A collection was taken later that evening for the locked-out workers.

These women brought a fighting spirit and a real air of enthusiasm to the conference proceedings. "For 10 years I just went to work and went home, like a robot," said Jody Wiesocki, who worked at Kaiser in



Militant/Scott Breen

Rally of steelworkers locked out by Kaiser Aluminum in Spokane last October. Women engaged in battles to defend their union was a high point of USWA conference.

Spokane. "The lockout woke me up. It has been the education of a lifetime. I'm having the best time of my whole life."

Rubber workers from Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, New York, and Tennessee used the meeting to discuss the April 23 expiration of the master agreement for several tire companies. Most rank-and-file women seemed to especially enjoy meeting one another and exchanging experiences both in the workshops and informally.

The American nationalist themes around the World Trade Organization (WTO), NAFTA, sweatshops, and China were pushed by the union officials throughout the conference. For example, a "town hall"

speak-out February 7 began with a video about sweatshops in Saipan. Participants were then asked to speak about how they had lost their jobs due to NAFTA, and then there were reportbacks from participants in the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle late last year.

One speaker, however, went against the tide of the USWA's economic nationalism. Simone Berg, a rubber worker from Des Moines, explained that the bosses are responsible for plant closures and layoffs, not workers in other countries.

Kristin Meriam is a member of USWA Local 12014 in Birmingham, Alabama.

Woodworkers 'not backing down' in Canada

BY NED DMYTRYSHYN
AND VUK KRCMAR-GRKAVAC

CHEMAINUS, British Columbia—Woodworkers here struck Chemainus Forest Products Ltd. February 3 after rejecting

the company's takeback demands.

The 68 members of the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers Local 1-80 (IWA) have set up picket lines at three locations. The main reason workers turned down the proposed contract was the attempt by the boss to impose alternative scheduling, which would eliminate overtime pay and make Saturday work mandatory. This could result in workers putting in 60 hours work one week but only 20 hours the next.

Other demands by the company include a five-year contract, a \$1.05 raise over five years, and an increase in the probation period from 30 to 45 days.

"The alternate scheduling is already in the contract but it is voluntary," said IWA plant chairman Bruce Emmerson. "During negotiations, the boss told us directly that he didn't want to ask us—he wanted to tell us—what schedule we would have."

"They just want to get more out of you," said a striker on the picket line. Commu-

nity support for the struggle is noticeable, as drivers and passengers of cars honk and wave as they go by. "We've gotten a lot of support from local unions," Emmerson said.

Despite a 100 percent vote to strike, the boss showed his arrogance by calling in the Labor Board to conduct another vote after the picket lines were already up. The second vote was 91 percent in favor of striking. The union members view the move to establish alternate schedules as an attempt by the bosses to set a precedent in advance of the upcoming Coast Master Agreement, which expires in mid-June and covers several thousand forest workers on the British Columbia coast.

"We've gone this far, we're not going to back down," commented another IWA striker.

Ned Dmytryshyn and Vuk Krcmar-Grkavac are members of the International Association of Machinists Local 11.

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AFL-CIO backs amnesty for immigrants

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In a reversal of its previous policy, the AFL-CIO executive council has called for an amnesty for undocumented workers and for repealing the current law that imposes sanctions on employers that hire these workers.

Announced in mid-February, the policy shift comes from two sources. One is to help the employers who face a labor shortage in the United States. The American Chamber of Commerce immediately applauded the move, for example.

The other is the fact that there continues to be a growing number of immigrants in the U.S. workforce who are part of the renewed resistance by growing layers of the working class to the bosses' assault on wages, benefits, and dignity on the job.

The union officialdom's announcement coincides with a rise in union membership for the first time in two decades, many of whom are immigrant workers. Some 20 percent of workers hired last year were immigrants with growing numbers of them joining the ranks of labor in meatpacking, construction, and garment and textile plants. An estimated 40 percent of the population growth in the 1990s has been the result of immigration.

Last fall, for example, more than 5,200 workers at the nation's largest textile plant in Kannapolis, North Carolina, voted to be represented by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. The workers there had waged several unsuccessful organizing drives over the past 25 years. The margin of victory this time, as even the capitalist media was forced to admit, was the growing numbers of immigrant workers who had recently gotten jobs at the mill who were strong supporters of the union.

Employers have also sought to defeat unionizing drives by harassing undocumented workers, many of whom are in the forefront of fighting for union representation. In Minneapolis, nine women who worked as maids at the Holiday Inn Express helped lead the fight for a union in August, only to be fired and face deportation orders several months later. Their union, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union, has 250,000 members, 75 percent of whom are immigrant workers.

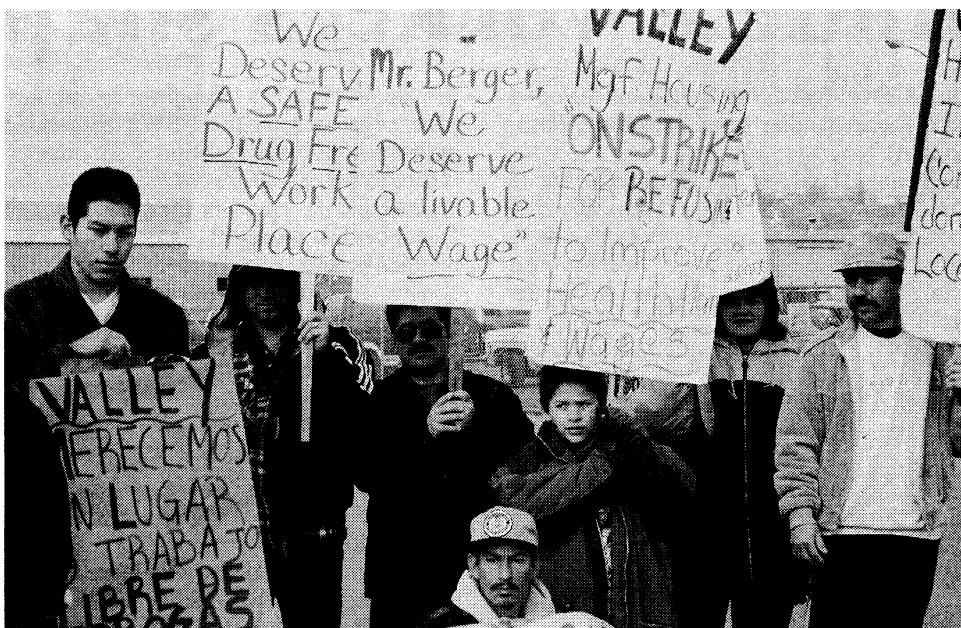
Commenting on the union federation's change in policy, an article in the February 17 *Washington Post* points to this as "a remarkable turnaround for the American labor movement and points it back toward its roots when the sons and daughters of turn-of-the-century immigrants became the leaders of the nation's industrial union drive in the 1930s."

Backs future deportations

The union federation's position, which will be presented in a number of public forums starting in April, backs amnesty for the estimated 6 million workers without papers currently in the United States and a halt to the current system in which employers must verify workers' eligibility to work in the United States, a law that the union officialdom backed when it was enacted 15 years ago.

Their proposals to "reform" the immigration system, however, also includes support to ongoing efforts by the federal government to keep additional undocumented workers out of the country. The proposals by the conservative layer that sits on top of the union membership would also endorse deportation of workers caught by the INS who immigrate illegally after the amnesty is in place. Their arguments are couched in continued support to economic nationalism, protectionism, and controlling what crosses the borders in products and human beings.

The AFL-CIO's new policy comes as



Militant/Scott Breen

Members of the Western Council of Industrial Workers Local 2739 picket Valley Home Manufactured Housing. The strike in Sunnyside, Washington, began last August. Immigrant workers are in the front lines of many union and social struggles today.

employers are facing a shortage of workers. A section of the employing class are pressing for similar immigration "reforms," including maintaining and expanding their so-called guest worker program. Under this law hundreds of thousands of workers from Mexico and throughout Latin America are brought into the United States for several

months at a time to work the farms and fields at low wages while forced to confront decrepit housing and work conditions.

Among those praising the union officialdom's new immigration plan is Randy Johnson, vice president of labor policy for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "I think this is an area where the business

community and organized labor can work together," he said.

The *New York Times* in a February 22 editorial described the labor federation's new approach to immigration laws as "a surprising turnaround" since "until now, organized labor has fought hard to keep illegal workers from taking jobs from higher-paid union workers."

The liberal *Times*, echoing the position of conservative commentators, called for rejecting the AFL-CIO's proposal, stating, "Amnesty would undermine the integrity of the country's immigration laws and would depress the wages of its lowest-paid native-born workers.... The primary problem with amnesties is that they beget more illegal immigration."

The *Times*, referring back to the previous amnesty in the 1980s, noted, "Amnesties signal foreign workers that American citizenship can be had by sneaking across the border, or staying beyond the term of one's visa, and hiding out until Congress passes the next amnesty."

A nationally syndicated column by conservative commentator Samuel Francis, entitled, "Unions desert U.S. workers for immigrants," worried that "the amnestied aliens will flood into the unions" and "pull even more illegals across the border."

"What the AFL-CIO decided to do," Francis wrote, "is one more betrayal of the American workers it's supposed to be looking out for, and one more act of treachery against America and its people."

Wellington steps up immigration raids

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Immigration raids on garment and other factories here highlight the changing composition of the workforce and challenges before the labor movement.

Union officials have so far damaged working-class solidarity by backing the jailings and deportations, saying immigrants threaten wages of "our" workers.

In early February, 60 workers of various Asian nationalities were hauled away from their jobs in a raid by police and immigration officials on a construction site here. Three were summarily deported to Thailand, while four were thrown into prison to await deportation to China. A further 18 were given 42 days to appeal before they too face deportation. The remaining 35 workers held current work permits or were New Zealand residents.

"They were all numbered and herded up like animals whether they were guilty or not...plastic handcuffs and all," said a subcontractor who witnessed the raid.

The workers, said by union officials to be paid as little as NZ\$6.50 per hour for up to 16 hours a day, were employed by subcontractors building million-dollar apartments in the upscale suburb of Remuera. The minimum wage is NZ\$7.55. (NZ\$1.00 = US 48 cents). No charges will be laid against the workers' employers.

A number of union officials support the action, portraying the government's attack as beneficial to workers in New Zealand.

Michael Jackson, secretary of the National Distribution Union (NDU), said "illegal" immigration "is a problem for New Zealand industry. The use of illegal immigrants is dragging wages and conditions down and making it harder to develop skills. Illegal labor like this is sending our skilled labor across the Ditch, the Tasman Sea between New Zealand and Australia."

Officials of the National Distribution Union, which organizes workers in the garment industry, last year pledged to "wage war against illegal workplaces," which they say threaten "legitimate" jobs in "legitimate" companies. Their comments followed a police and immigration raid last October on a clothing factory in West Auckland where seven Thai women were working. The workers were paid NZ\$570 a month for 13-hour days and forced to live in the factory by their employer who had seized their passports.

The women, who have now all returned to Thailand, had phoned a telephone help line set up by police and the Human Rights Commission after a series of articles in the *New Zealand Herald* last June claiming large numbers of Thai women were being lured to New Zealand and forced to work as prostitutes.

Having generated public concern about the issue, the government sent cops and immigration officials to raid an Auckland brothel where Thai women were said to be working. A Thai woman with HIV was also deported as part of a scare campaign that such immigrants were contributing to the spread of AIDS. A civic meeting was held to organize city officials, police, immigration officials, and human rights workers to "identify and assist women wanting to get off the game" and be returned to their country of origin.

'Fair labor' campaign

The police raid on the Auckland clothing factory prompted NDU official Jackson to say that the raid had "merely scratched the surface" and that hundreds of Asians were working in sweatshops in the city. Descriptions of similar workplaces followed in a *Herald* investigation, and in calls to a Labour Department phone line.

With newly elected Labour Party prime minister Helen Clark saying sweatshops are on notice from the government, a Labour Department investigation into "backyard factories" is now underway. In January alone 33 premises were raided in Auckland and removal orders served on some workers that were said to be working illegally. The campaign is also backed by the Green Party whose employment and industrial relations spokesperson, Susan Bradford, said before the election that sweatshops had to be stamped out.

An NDU official who subsequently visited a South Auckland garage where five Chinese women were employed sewing garments for a women's fashion label said, "New Zealand companies who have good health and safety conditions are being undercut by this type of activity." The union's clothing and industry sector secretary has proposed a joint union-employer "fair labor" campaign, where manufacturers and retailers are encouraged not to use underpaid workers or buy products from employers who do.

This stepped-up harassment of immigrant workers, especially from Asia, comes in the context of rapidly growing immigration to New Zealand from that region over the last 15 years. New Zealand's Asian population grew by 96 percent from 1986 to 1991 and by 71 percent from 1991 to 1996. People of Asian descent comprised 4.4 percent of the population in the 1996 census, while the longer-standing migrant population from the Pacific Islands comprised 4.8 percent. In Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, people of Asian origin make up 8 percent of the population and Pacific Islanders 12 percent. Maori, who are indigenous to New Zealand, make up 9 percent.

Employers in the garment industry, keen to cut costs in the face of competition from clothing manufacturers overseas, are drawing in immigrant workers who they hope will feel less secure to fight for their rights. Wages in the industry are low by New Zealand standards, and a growing number of workers are employed in even poorer conditions as outworkers, sewing on contract at home.

Many immigrant workers in the garment trade are already highly skilled, having trained as sewing machine operators or cutters in their own countries. A young Cambodian sewer at one Auckland factory that makes work clothing recognized the Phnom Penh garment factory where the *New Zealand Herald* reported 300 workers had rallied for better wages and conditions February 23 as one where she had previously worked.

Revival of garment industry

The garment industry in New Zealand is undergoing something of a revival, with a shortage of skilled workers at present. It has been in a decline for 25 years and contracted sharply following deregulation and the reduction of tariffs in the late 1980s. Mass-market clothing manufacturers, unable to produce profitably in the face of cheaper imported products made overseas, either closed or went offshore.

Today, based on driving down costs and intensifying exploitation of the workforce, profitable operators are springing up in the production of knitwear, textiles, casual and work clothing, fashion garments, and other specialized products, especially for export. Unionization levels have halved since 1991.

Stepped-up immigration raids in recent weeks follow the introduction of legislation last October giving all visitors to the country 42 days from the date their entry permit expires to leave New Zealand or file an appeal to stay. If they do not, for whatever reason, they can be apprehended without notice, arrested, and deported immediately.

For example, a 21-year-old Tongan woman was deported after police raided her home February 21 and arrested her and her 19-year-old brother Viliami. She came to New Zealand last year to join the rest of her family living here. The family had been served removal orders in 1993. Viliami, a senior in high school, said his parents had stayed because they wanted a better life for their children. "They stayed for the kids, for the education—there was nothing in Tonga for us." Viliami now awaits an immigration minister's review of the case, or he too will be deported in one month.

Felicity Coggan is a member of the National Distribution Union.

from *Pathfinder*

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by Karl Marx

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CAMPAIGNING WITH 'CAPITALISM'S WORLD DISORDER'

Struggle-minded workers snap up book

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

As the campaign to sell and place *Capitalism's World Disorder—Working Class Politics at the Millennium*, and the Spanish Language edition of *El desorden mundial del capitalismo—politica obrera al milenio* enters its last week, supporters of the effort are taking this and other Pathfinder titles to political actions and discussions among working people.

"Workers who attended a rally in Frankfort, Kentucky, February 23 to oppose cuts in workers compensation were offered an alternative view to the America Firstism and anti-China chauvinism of the AFL-CIO officials who organized it," report Marian Russell and John Sarge, who joined the action. "Rally participants bought 25 copies of the *Militant* and two subscriptions, along with a copy of *Teamster Rebellion*."

Campaign supporters among the 800 participants in the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) First International Women's Conference in Pittsburgh on February 6-9 found the workers there "very open to discussing politics on a high level," reports Kristin Meriam. "We sold two copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*, one to

an AK Steel fighter in her 70s, and the other to a Kaiser worker from Spokane, [Washington]."

Jacque Henderson in Houston writes to the *Militant* of "a bus driver who called the bookstore during an hour's break in his drive from Mexico to the east coast. I went to meet him, and spread a range of books on the hood of my car. He decided to buy *El desorden mundial del capitalismo: obrera politica al milenio*. We talked about the march of 50,000 people in South Carolina for removal of the Confederate flag."

"Since the first week of February, 17 copies of the book have been sold in both the English- and Spanish-language editions in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal," report Maria Isabel LeBlanc and John Steele from Toronto. "As well, 22 people have signed up for the pre-publication offer of the French-language edition, which will be published within the next two weeks. A supporter signed up for eight copies in order get at least seven of them into the hands of friends in Haiti. Supporters have also taken the first steps to try to get the book into the huge Metro Toronto library system."

Cindy Jaquith reports from Birmingham

that a co-worker at a wrought-iron furniture plant organized by the USWA responded enthusiastically to Pathfinder supporters' effort to place *El desorden mundial del capitalismo* in stores in the rural town of Oneonta. The owner of a store she recommended ordered two copies of the new title.

This week we are also running a special report by participants in the 10,000-strong protest on March 7 in Tallahassee.

❖

BY ANGEL LARISCY

TALLAHASSEE, Florida—A table set up at the March 7 Tallahassee march attracted a lot of interest among the thousands of workers and students who turned out to oppose attacks on affirmative action in the state of Florida. Amid rolling political discussions, four introductory subscriptions to the *Militant* and 300 single copies were sold, along with more than \$750 worth of Pathfinder books. Titles sold included eight cop-

ies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* and four copies of the new book *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*.

Books by leaders of the Cuban revolution and titles by Malcolm X and on Black rights proved popular. "I want to find out the truth about Cuba," remarked one woman from Miami.

Two Tallahassee high school students bought *Socialism and Man in Cuba* by Che Guevara, *Abortion is a Woman's Right*, *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* by Thomas Sankara, and the *Join the Young Socialists* pamphlet. They plan to circulate the material among their friends.

The day after the action, two of the team visited five bookstores in Tallahassee. Two buyers said they would order a total of fifteen copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* as well as copies of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* and *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*.

N.Y. meeting celebrates new books

Continued from front page

to *Young People*—two of the titles that were launched at the book fair in Havana—gave the main presentation.

This meeting, said Barnes, celebrates the achievements of the Pathfinder team that represented the publishing house at the international book fair in Havana, Cuba. The annual fair ran from February 9 to 15. Among several new books launched at the book fair were the two titles produced by joint efforts of Pathfinder and Cuban publishing houses. "Enormous resources went into this effort," Barnes said, "producing enormous results."

The meeting also celebrated the progress worker-bolsheviks in the SWP are making in organizing and structuring the party to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the class struggle today, and to build a revolutionary proletarian organization out of that activity.

Book fair team members Samantha Kern of the Young Socialists and Linda Jenness, a volunteer in Pathfinder's reprint project, both described the keen interest among Cuban working people and students in the hundreds of titles displayed in Pathfinder's booth.

Other team members were seated on the stage, along with Luis Madrid, the editor of the just-released Spanish-language edition of *Capitalism's World Disorder* (soon to be joined by a French-language edition); Ma'mud Shirvani, who is Pathfinder's Farsi editor; Dave Prince, the director of Pathfinder's print shop; and James Harris, an SWP leader who was part of a recent

farmers tour to Cuba.

The stage was framed by displays of the covers of the above titles, and other party-building manuals that are coming back into their own today in the context of increased class polarization and resistance by working people, like *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*.

Among those who turned out at the Cooper Union auditorium in lower Manhattan were workers and young fighters from Canada, Seattle, San Francisco, the Midwest, and a number of states on the eastern seaboard. Representation from the Young Socialists was a strong feature of the turnout.

Leaders of the Young Socialists attended, fresh from a meeting of the organization's National Committee, as well as leaders of the party's trade union fractions in the auto, steel, rail, and airline and aerospace industries.

The bulk of the audience comprised workers and youth from the New York and New Jersey area. An auto worker, an electrical worker, a construction worker, a student of South African origin, and a young meat-packer were among those attending their first socialist meeting of such a scale.

The organized supporters of the SWP also turned out in numbers for the meeting. Many of them are involved in the Pathfinder reprint project. They, in growing numbers, form part of an international book production machine. Doug Nelson welcomed people to the meeting on behalf of the four newly organized SWP branches in New Jersey and New York—one in Brooklyn, two in Manhattan, and one in Newark—that hosted the meeting. Nelson works in Pathfinder's print shop, which he said was "born with the October Revolution."

Many took advantage of a special sale of a number of Marxist classics, going for prices as low as a dollar or 50 cents. Young Socialist members were seen walking away with stacks of books. "I've been waiting for this," said Lou Newton, a high school student in Kent, Ohio, "I bought *In Defense of Marxism*."

Michael Martinez from Miami listed 10 or more titles he had purchased. A Dominican-born worker at the Ford Motor plant in Metuchen, New Jersey, bought *Socialism on Trial* by James Cannon of the sale table, and *Making History* at the regular Pathfinder table.

Participants in the meeting donated or pledged \$7,500 to a special Pathfinder "fighting fund" to finance the continued work of the publishing house. Jack Barnes announced to loud applause that contributions to the Capital Fund, out of which larger-scale improvements and renovations to the print shop and other facilities are financed, had reached \$150,000 just before the meeting. Another \$11,000 in capital fund contributions was raised that day.

Next week the *Militant* will carry a full report of the meeting, and one to be held in San Francisco March 12.

Students protest Diallo verdict



High school students march across Brooklyn Bridge March 3 against Diallo verdict

Continued from front page

Diallo was gunned down in the Bronx last year. "That proves it's not a mistake. It's recurring. There's something wrong with our system and we must do something about it," he said.

"We care about society. It's disturbing to find out justice isn't served in this country," said 17-year-old Sarah Nerbo. So.

During the week leading up to the march, students at Hunter High held rallies and discussions every day during lunch time.

In Jersey City, New Jersey, about 400 students from Snyder High School walked out of morning classes March 1 and marched to City Hall to protest racist treatment by the cops and the killing of Diallo. On their way the students marched to Lincoln High to call on students there to join them, but found that authorities had barricaded the school grounds, preventing them from entering or other students from leaving.

'Convict the guilty police'

Chanting "Convict the Guilty Police," some 1,500 demonstrators rallied in front of the Justice Department in Washington, D.C., March 2. Most of the largely young crowd came on buses from New York City to demand that the federal government step in and convict the four cops who shot and killed Diallo. Groups of youth held up wallets as they chanted, "It's a wallet not a gun!" Cops claim they fired 41 bullets at Diallo when they mistook his wallet for a gun.

"I came because this could happen to any one of us, Black or Puerto Rican," said Monica Gutierrez, 19, who lives in the area of the Bronx where Diallo was killed. "The cops treat us the same. We must be united and fight back."

Twenty-year-old Richard Hammond from Brooklyn said this was his first demonstration. "The cops get special treatment from the system. That's why they moved the trial to Albany. Black people can't get justice in America," he said.

Several organized groups in the rally held

banners. Among them were Howard and Georgetown Law Students. A large contingent was present from the Service Employee International Union (SEIU).

Audrey Johnson and Gerald Osborne work in an office nearby. When they heard about the protest on the radio they decided to take an extended lunch break. "I just couldn't believe the verdict," said Johnson. "There is no way you can justify shooting someone 41 times for any reason."

During the rally Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder, Jr., met inside the Department of Justice with Diallo's parents, Democratic party politician Alfred Sharpton, and several congressmen. According to the *Washington Post*, Holder explained that federal prosecutions after state trials happen only about once or twice a year.

In Boston, some 120 people rallied in front of the JFK Federal Building February 28. The event was organized by "Next Movement," a group of young people of color who explain they are "organizing to fight oppression."

Charles Yancey, a Black city council member, and Thomas Atkins of the NAACP, addressed the rally. But most of those who spoke were young people who took the open mike and explained why they were there. Tamara Williams, a graduate student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said that she had school work to do that day but explained, "No matter what work I have to do I had to be here to let others know that there are people out here who won't take this."

After rallying in front of the federal building the protesters marched through the streets of downtown Boston.

Elena Tate, a student at Hunter College and a member of the Young Socialists; Sam Manuel, member of the United Transportation Union in Washington, D.C.; and Ted Leonard, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, contributed to this article.

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'Militant' readers prepare circulation drive

New mood of resistance among workers, farmers will mark sales campaign

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* will launch an eight-week international campaign March 25 to increase the circulation and subscription base of the two publications. The drive will end May 21.

Socialist workers, members of the Young Socialists, and others who may want to join the circulation drive can do so as they participate in political events and protest actions, join strikers and others on picket lines, talk with co-workers on the job, and meet students on college campuses. Supporters will place a priority on getting out to working-class neighborhoods in the areas where they live and work, and showing the paper around on the job and to others in their unions.

Militant supporters will go into the drive with a big effort at the March 20-21 Rally for Rural America, reaching out to farmers, union activists, and others from across the United States who will travel in buses to Washington, D.C., to protest the crisis confronting farmers. A few days later on March 25 socialist workers will join with fellow unionists showing solidarity with locked-out members of the United Steelworkers of America at AK Steel in Mansfield, Ohio.

A central feature of politics in the United States today is that although strikes and labor battles are not necessarily winning more often, no matter what the immediate outcome, more workers decide to keep reaching out, joining in other actions, and building solidarity.

In a presentation at the Havana International Book Fair launching *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*, Pathfinder president Mary-Alice Waters noted that the bosses' drive to lower wages, extend the working day, speed up production lines, and squeeze more out of workers in general has resulted in sharply worse conditions on the job in mines, mills, and factories across the United States.

"Under these conditions, a new mood of resistance and struggle is developing among working people in the United States, and a new vanguard is beginning to emerge out of the labor battles and struggles by working farmers to keep their land," Waters said.

"Working people, tested in struggle, are beginning to know and trust each other," Waters added. "They are beginning to take

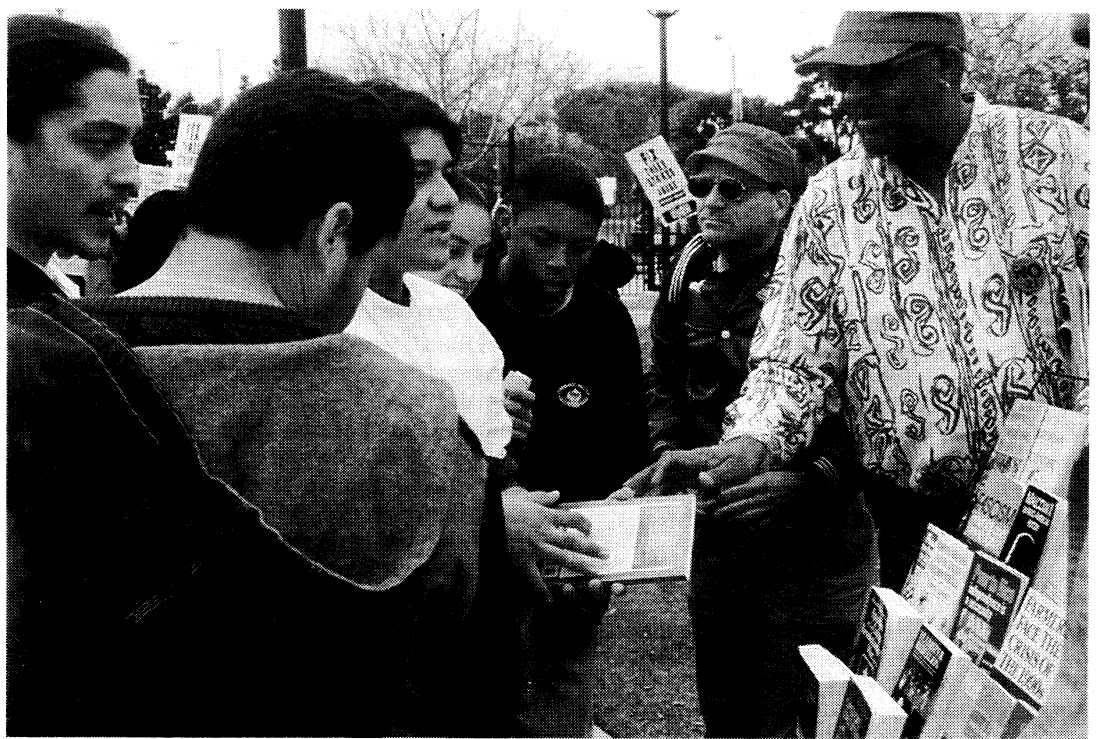
measure of their collective strength, to gain confidence, to extend the hand of solidarity from one struggle to the next. To come together and look for ways forward. And this is new.

"As this process unfolds, a new generation of young people, drawn toward these struggles, is awakening to political consciousness and action, and fighters of all ages are increasingly open to new ideas, looking for answers to explain the world in which we live. Just as important, they are looking for examples of how to fight back successfully against the most powerful ruling class the oppressed and exploited of the world have ever had to take on and defeat."

Waters's remarks highlight why there are increasing opportunities to reach out to working-class fighters and young rebels to win new readership to the socialist press, as well as new recruits to the communist movement.

Socialist workers organized in the industrial unions will be taking goals for all three publications for sales to fellow union members. Opportunities abound to win new subscribers among workers, including those who have been or are currently involved in labor battles. Among meatpackers on strike in New Zealand, Steelworkers locked out at Kaiser Aluminum, engineers and technicians striking for a contract at Boeing, hospital workers in France, dockworkers and truck drivers, coal miners protesting cuts in medical care and black lung benefits, and unionists marching to defend affirmative actions there are many who will want to regularly read the socialist press.

The subscription drive will be a concentrated effort by supporters in Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, the United States, and other countries around the world. It will build on the campaign to sell *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, which involved getting Pathfinder titles into the hands of workers, farmers, and youth, and getting libraries and bookstores to purchase copies of the book for resale. Some of the efforts around that campaign resulted in a few retail stores ordering



SWP candidate for Oakland City Council Omari Musa discussing Pathfinder books, the *Militant*, and *Perspectiva Mundial* with participants in March 4 action against Proposition 21.

weekly bundles of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Building a revolutionary party

Many of the fighters who bought *Capitalism's World Disorder* will want to buy its companion volume: *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*. This Pathfinder title is a handbook on building a revolutionary party of industrial workers and its strategic course to fight for the transformation of the unions into revolutionary instruments of struggle. Both books and the *Militant* are tools for growing numbers who are attracted to a scientific analysis of the capitalist system and its inevitable social crises, which lead to economic devastation, fascist tyranny, and world war.

For these same reasons every issue of *New International*—in English, French, Icelandic, Spanish, and Swedish—is one that can help shed light on the historic lessons and conquests of working-class struggle, from the alliance of workers and farmers, to the place of the Cuban revolution in the world today, to why U.S. imperialism lost the Cold

War. Each of these will help every vanguard militant become a better fighter, a more class-conscious proletarian, and more ready to consider the need to build a revolutionary party.

Workers and farmers need 'Militant'

Workers, farmers, and young fighters need the *Militant*. It provides a proletarian internationalist outlook with coverage of struggles and political developments around the world. Like no other paper, it explains how the deepening crisis of capitalism spawns the seeds of reactionary and fascist movements from the Freedom Party in Austria to Patrick Buchanan's election campaign in the United States.

The paper helps arm workers with a more generalized view of the world and a scientific understanding of the world capitalist system as a whole. The *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* help to link fighters together, including those involved in different struggles around the world. The *Militant* is the only newspaper where readers can absorb the true history and lessons of the international working-class movement or dissect the shifts in relations among all classes of society. The paper tells the truth about these political questions from a working-class viewpoint and presents communist answers and perspectives.

That's why this is a campaign for communism, which offers a revolutionary perspective and the fight for a new society.

The *Militant* encourages its supporters to send in notes and reports on sales activities and especially political discussions with workers and farmers about their views on world events. Many readers will be interested in the weekly progress of the circulation effort. Photos of literature tables, sales at protest actions, and at factory plant gates are welcome.

Polarization marks Pinochet's return

BY GREG MCCARTAN

Gen. Augusto Pinochet, former dictator of Chile, received a hero's welcome from the military and right-wing forces in the capital of Santiago upon his return from 16 months of house arrest in Britain.

The events show how polarized Chile is today. Much of what happened clearly had less to do with the past than with anticipation by wings of the ruling class of the need to brutally suppress working people in the future as struggles against economic hardship and denial of rights grow.

"Kill them! Kill them! Throw out the pigs!" yelled dozens of young rightist Pinochet supporters as they chased a few Communist Party youth taunting the crowd gathered outside the hospital where the general was taken after his return.

Police patrolled parts of the capital Santiago in armored trucks mounted with water cannons. Sharpshooters were stationed on top of the hospital.

Pinochet led a U.S.-organized coup against the democratically elected govern-

ment of Salvador Allende in 1973 and established a military dictatorship. Under an agreement that replaced the regime with one elected in 1990, the constitution gives the armed forces independent powers, including over promotions, the military budget, and representation in the Senate.

While visiting Britain Pinochet was arrested under a Spanish warrant and held as appeals of extradition requests wound their way through the courts. He was released under a ruling that he was not physically or mentally fit to stand trial in Spain.

Upon touching down in Chile, Pinochet walked off the aircraft smiling and waving his cane, the only aid he used for walking. He was greeted by all the commanders of the armed forces, a 50-member military band, and a large phalanx of the notorious elite Black Berets in full combat gear.

A protest of 1,500 had signs with pictures of people disappeared or executed under the military regime, and called for stripping the general's senatorial immunity so he can be tried on charges of torture and kidnapping.

Many perish in Mozambique flood

Continued from Page 16

Incomati, and Save in the central and southern portions of the country flooded. This followed weeks of heavy rains, a cyclone that roared in from the Indian Ocean, and more floodwaters flowing down from South Africa and Zimbabwe. "Rivers up to 300 meters wide became 25 kilometers wide," said a spokesperson for the South African military, which has been organizing rescue efforts.

Chissano has called for large-scale financial aid and cancellation of the country's \$8.3 billion foreign debt.

Imperialist oppression

Mozambique is a country oppressed by imperialism. Workers and peasants there waged a battle against Portuguese colonial rule that culminated in independence in 1975, opening a democratic revolution. In response, the neighboring regime of apartheid South Africa, with Washington's direct complicity, stepped up military, economic, and political efforts to destabilize the new government.

Pretoria took over the organization of the counterrevolutionary Renamo outfit. Thousands were killed as Renamo waged war against the ruling Frelimo government and wrecked what was left of the economy. The war only ended in 1992.

Today Mozambique is presented in the capitalist press as a "success story" with a rapid economic growth rate. Last month U.S. president William Clinton, as part of portraying Washington as a "partner" of African countries, pointed to the country as an example for the rest of Africa. His words turned out to be true in a way he did not intend, since none have escaped the harsh

reality of underdevelopment imposed on them by imperialism.

South African capital in particular—which has exploited the labor and land of Mozambique for decades—has intensified its penetration of the economy. Despite such "success," per capital annual income hovers at about \$150 a year.

Mozambican officials have criticized Washington, London, and Lisbon for their slow response to aid requests. South African military helicopters had picked close to 10,000 people out of trees by the time that more helicopters, food, and other material aid began arriving in quantity from the United States and Europe. More than a week after the worst floods developed, Washington sent up to 900 troops into Mozambique.

An editorial in the country's main newspaper, *Noticias*, captured the view of many in the country when it wrote: "When the West wants to intervene militarily anywhere in the world, they get there in record time."

In contrast, the government of revolutionary Cuba has provided a brigade of volunteer doctors in Mozambique for decades. Today there are 93 Cuban doctors deployed throughout the country.

CNN, the BBC, and big-business newspapers worldwide present Mozambicans as nothing but victims. One reporter, however, put a dent in the familiar image of helpless Africans as portrayed ad nauseam in North America and Europe.

"Amazing tales of heroism, compassion, and almost superhuman endurance on the part of countless ordinary farmers and townspeople are surfacing in the wasteland of mud called Mozambique," wrote Paul Salopek, reporting in the March 6 *Chicago Tribune* from Chokwe. "Their stoic resili-

Illinois residents protest new prison site

BY DAVID ROSENFELD

HOPKINS PARK, Illinois—A major controversy has broken out here, pitting farmers and other residents against local officials, land developers, and the administration of Gov. George Ryan.

The controversy revolves around the proposed building of a new prison here. The village of Hopkins Park is a rural town of 800 people located in the overwhelmingly Black township of Pembroke, about 60 miles south of Chicago.

About 50 Pembroke residents attended a stormy township board meeting February 7 to question the prison construction. Many were members of the Pembroke Advocates for Truth (PAT), which was formed to counter a campaign orchestrated in favor of building the 1,800-bed prison facility for female felons.

Louise Campbell-Anthony and Mark Anthony, who raise goats and organic produce, are drafting a position paper called "Reconsider 'Prison Economics' for Pembroke." The paper explains the historic racist "economic and political strangulation of Pembroke." While the development of the prison is seen by PAT members as a threat to their farms, tourism and their "rural way of life," this is much more than a "not-in-my-backyard" effort. The position paper maintains, "Not only is our future economic independence in jeopardy, but our moral integrity and obligation to the welfare of our own African-American people is asked to be compromised."

Campbell-Anthony, a leader of PAT, does not describe prisoners as criminals. "Crime is manufactured by racist American society. They grew the drugs. They created the ghettos. My perspective is that they are the criminals. Prisoners are people who have been captured. This has been our condition since we were brought here from Africa."

Pamela Basu is a farmer and leader of PAT. Basu explained Pembroke Township's residents are the descendants of Blacks who migrated from the South in search of jobs in northern industrial cities like Chicago in the 1940s. Some of them did not take to city life, and while they wanted to go back to farming, they did not want to go back to the Jim Crow South. So many of them founded small agricultural communities like Pembroke Township.

The land in Pembroke Township was not coveted by other farmers because it was thought to be too sandy and marshy. Campbell-Anthony says that over the years "the Black settlers worked the soil and now we have good topsoil."

The plots are small, but well suited to organic farming. Many of the local farmers have received certification from the Organic Crop Improvement Association. The environmental impact of the prison directly threatens the certification of the Basu farm.

She and her husband are founding members of the Pembroke Farmers Cooperative. They own the largest farm in the recently formed co-op, which is made up of nearly 20 farms in the township. "The lights, sewers, and other waste from the prison alone will have disastrous effects on my crops," she said.

Reporting on the February 7 meeting, the Kankakee Daily Journal said, "As residents raised their criticism...the meeting became a forum for taxpayers' protests and questions." The newspaper also reported that "by the end of the evening, mostly due to public demand, Larry Gibbs resigned his position on the township planning board so [Johari] Cole could be appointed by the supervisor." Cole is a leader of PAT who played a prominent role in protesting the prison at the meeting.

Threats to fire employees

Pamela Basu's farm is directly threatened by the prison. Her job as Hopkins Park treasurer has also been in jeopardy as a result of her outspoken opposition to the prison.

Tony Perry, a wealthy real estate developer with close ties to Governor Ryan, orchestrated the Hopkins Park application for the prison. He holds options on the land where the prison is slated to be built and is a paid consultant for Hopkins Park. In a January 12 letter to Hopkins Park mayor David Leggett, Perry threatened to sever relations with the village unless Basu was reprimanded and fired "if she is not of a mind to stop criticism of the project goals and myself."

The village board responded in a meet-

ing that evening by passing a motion to give the mayor authority to fire village employees for "continued poor service and improprieties," and a motion "that no employee make any statements to the press unless authorized by the mayor."

While Basu remains employed by the village, she says she believes the groundwork is being laid for her firing. She continues to speak out and organize against the prison as a private citizen.

The village board's action became the lead story of the February 8 Daily Journal, with the headline "Hopkins Park gags clerk, prison foe" splashed across the front page.

Pembroke Advocates for Truth was formed soon after what was advertised as a public hearing on the prison. But that meeting last fall turned out to be a staged prison rally with hundreds of people bussed in from outside the village to whoop it up for the prison in front of media cameras.

Not helpless and hopeless

"The Chicago Sun-Times ran a spread on how poor and dilapidated our houses are, with no good farming land, no sources of income, people with outhouses. When we were on a radio call-in show on WVON in Chicago, people said we should be glad to get a prison. We are constantly portrayed as

a helpless community that has no hope for anything," explained Campbell-Anthony.

Hopeless and helpless are probably the last words a person would think of when describing the members of the Pembroke Advocates for Truth. At a January PAT meeting in Hopkins Park, five leaders of the group met to map out a strategy to "expose and educate" to stop the prison. All but one person at the meeting farms, in addition to gaining income from outside jobs or small businesses.

The group has put together packets of newspaper clippings, newsletters, items pulled down from the Internet, and other information to bolster their case. They are reaching out to local residents, others fighting urban sprawl, and civil liberties groups. They have gathered 200 signatures on a petition against the prison. And they closely monitor the various planning board and other governmental meetings that they can intervene in to take their case to a wider public. Interest was expressed at the meeting in bringing Rubin "Hurricane" Carter to the area to help with their fight. Carter was released from prison after serving more than 20 years on frame-up charges of murder and is the subject of the currently running Hollywood movie "The Hurricane."

200 condemn cop killing in Philadelphia

BY PETE SEIDMAN

PHILADELPHIA—Some 200 protesters demanded "Justice for Erin Forbes" at a protest outside the Lower Merion Police Department February 24. Forbes, a 26-year-old Black man, was shot and killed by Lower Merion cops January 10.

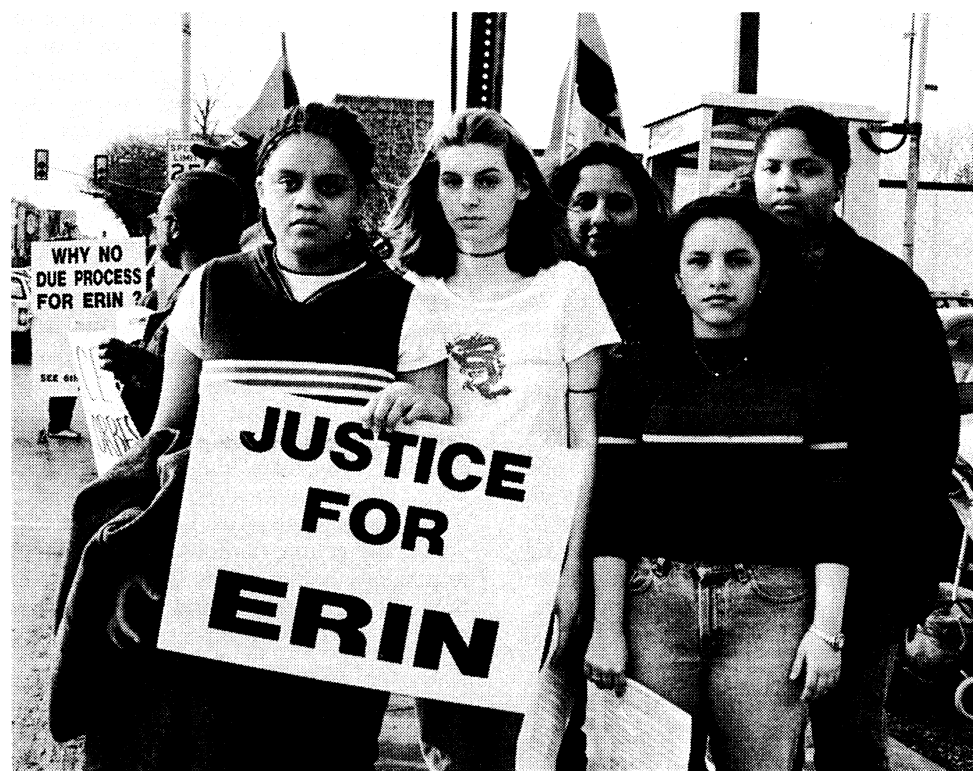
Forbes's mother, Ella Forbes, thanked rally participants for taking part in the protest against the police murder of her son and ongoing assaults on African-American people. "Erin is another statistic. There have been a number of cases, some of which don't get into the news," she said.

Two weeks earlier, some 40 people picketed the police station in a protest organized by the family's church. Ella Forbes is a professor of African-American studies at Temple University. Her husband, Lorenzo, is a microbiologist.

On February 22, Forbes's parents filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court charging that he was the victim of unreasonable and excessive force and summary punishment and demanding \$100,000 in damages. The lawsuit also seeks court-ordered policies to avoid racial profiling or other forms of racial discrimination.

On February 18, U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah wrote Attorney General Janet Reno asking the Justice Department to launch an investigation into the shooting.

Lower Merion Township is a wealthy, predominantly white suburb of Philadelphia. According to Marie LaForest, Forbes's fiancé, Forbes had to drive through there on his way home from a midnight shift job. His parents bought him a new Hyundai "because



Militant/Nancy Cole

Students in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, at protest February 2 against police killing of Erin Forbes. Cops shot the 26-year-old Black man on January 10.

the used cars he was driving kept breaking down. The cops kept stopping him," LaForest said. "He told his aunt Jackie Caleb 'it was a good week if he was only stopped three times by the police.'"

Police claim that Forbes stole \$4 from a convenience store, clubbed the clerk, and then fled by car. Their story is that several officers stopped Forbes's car after a chase. Forbes then jumped from the car brandishing a three-foot walking cane at Officer John Salkowski, leaving the cop no choice but to open fire.

The family says Forbes was unarmed and still wearing a uniform from his overnight job as a security guard when he was stopped. The suit charges the slightly built 150-pound college student was surrounded by several policemen who had mace, bulletproof vests, nightsticks and semiautomatic weapons. It denies Forbes was carrying a weapon, posed a threat to the safety of himself or others, or resisted or evaded arrest.

Forbes was shot shortly after 5:00 a.m. Although he was carrying his driver's license, military identification, and car owner's card with him, his family was not notified of his death until 3:00 p.m. that afternoon.

Lower Merion Police Superintendent Joseph Daly has refused to comment on the case until a probe by the Philadelphia District Attorney's office is completed, which he told the Forbes family could take up to six months. Forbes's family, working with several churches in the area, has called for another protest at the Lower Merion police department for March 9 at 4:00 p.m.

In January, while a student at Temple and chairperson of the Philadelphia chapter of the Young Socialists, Forbes was part of a delegation of young people to an International Youth Brigade in Cuba. Later, Forbes did a stint in the army. When he got out, he tutored elementary school students for the Bright Lights Project. He attended the Temple of the Black Messiah. At the time he was shot, he was active in the New Black Panther Party and was enrolled at West Chester University intending to major in education.

In a statement to the February 24 protest, Forbes's family announced that "by seeking this civil suit, they are continuing Erin's activism by challenging a system which holds Black life to be of little or no value, a system that allows law enforcement officers to believe that they are not bound to respect the rights of African-Americans, a system which allows racial profiling and the perpetrators of racial profiling to use the excuse that the Black people they target constitute a danger to their safety as justification for summarily acting as judge, jury and executioner."

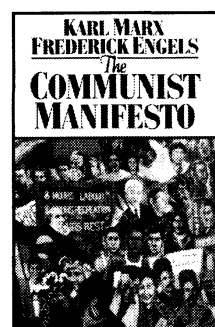
"Erin is dead," the statement says, "because those officers of the law, sworn to protect and serve citizens, clearly did not feel bound to respect his rights as a citizen when they approached him with their guns drawn. Racial profiling allowed them to feel justified in abridging Erin's rights and taking his life."

Pete Seidman is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 8264.

from Pathfinder

Malcolm X Talks to Young People

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Farmers in Ireland assess recent blockades

BY PAUL DAVIES

DONEGAL, Republic of Ireland—At a meeting here February 26 the council of the Donegal branch of the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) voted to re-impose a blockade of Donegal Meats, after the company threatened to drop the price paid to farmers for lower-grade cattle. The bosses at Donegal Meats, a meat processing company in Creggan, rapidly backed off and assured farmers that the price would remain the same.

"We wrapped them over the knuckles this weekend," said Robin Craig, a sheep and cattle farmer. "There is no reason not to re-impose the blockade if we need to." In January farmers in Donegal had joined with farmers throughout the Republic of Ireland to blockade meat processing plants in the fight for better prices. They won an increase from 82 pence to 90 pence a pound for lower-grade cattle, despite a high court injunction and an attempt to fine the farmers association half a million pounds a day (one pence = US 1.5 cents, £1 = US\$1.57).

Farmers in the Republic of Ireland—where the economy is on a strong upturn, often labeled the "Celtic Tiger" by commentators in the big business press—have not escaped from the declining prices of agricultural commodities. As in the United Kingdom and elsewhere around the world, pig farmers have been especially hard hit. "It now costs 85 pence for a farmer to produce one kilo of pig meat, but they will only receive 70 pence for this," explained Jim Carmichael, a working farmer and leader of the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA). "Since 1995 the price dairy farmers receive for milk has declined by about 30 percent," he said. Farmers face a widening gap between their costs of production and the price that they get for what they produce.

Agriculture continues to play a key role in the Irish economy, despite the decline in the number of farms. More than 100,000 farmers are involved in beef production alone. The crisis has disproportionately hit smaller farmers, forcing more of them off the land. Between 1984 and 1995 the number of farms dropped by 67,000. The number of large farms—those over 50 hectares—remained the same.

Like their counterparts in Europe, farmers in Ireland have faced cuts in government subsidies as a result of the changes to the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. Some 60 percent of Irish farmers now supplement their farm income with wages from other full- or part-time jobs.

Craig explained how Donegal farmers organized the recent blockade of the meat processing plants. "We picketed around the clock at the factory for 10 days and were joined by a small number of farmers from across the border in county Derry in Northern Ireland. We set up a cattle trough to barbecue food and we got a lot of community support. Local businesses donated food and drink.

"We got support from dairy farmers who are members of the Irish Creameries and Milk Suppliers Association," said Michael McHugh, a working farmer who farms 20 hectares of land and also works in the office of the IFA. "We organized a meeting in a nearby village with trade union representatives at the factory to win their support. Many workers at the plant are also farmers."

'See confidence in farmers'

"Union officials agreed to lobby the government on our behalf," said McHugh. "Between 15 and 80 farmers and their supporters picketed the plant at any one time and we organized a local rally that drew 600 people. For the first time in years you can see some confidence in farmers around here."

Another local farmer, Austin Stevenson, a member of the Irish Cattle and Stockherders Association, explained that the demands of the action did not benefit members of his organization that produce higher grade cattle. "What we want is a 15-pence-a-pound gap between the highest grade and the next grade down, so that when the price for lower grade meat went up as a result of the action the price of the higher grade meat should have also gone up, but this didn't happen. But we wouldn't cross the picket line; we wanted to show unity with the IFA farmers. I went to the picket four times myself."

"I didn't support the action to begin with," said Jim Devaney, a grain and cattle farmer from Newtown Cunningham. "I believe in settling these things through negotiation. But after the high court injunction was imposed I changed my attitude. They threatened to seize the assets of the IFA. The farmers who were picketing were fighting for their survival, so I started to take part in the pickets."

McHugh also pointed out that the number of farmers attending the picket line grew substantially after the injunction was imposed.

Following the example of the action in the south, farmers who are members of the NIAPA took similar action for a single day at eight meat processing plants in the British-occupied north of Ireland.

Protests had impact

"The meat companies will never admit it, but our protests had an impact," explained Carmichael. "As a result of our action some individual farmers got a rise in price and we held off a further decline in price that was taking place in the rest of the UK. The factories are now beginning to talk to us and we also closed the gap between payments for different grades of meat. Maybe nothing more will happen, but we are keeping our options open and we reserve the right to picket in the future."

"At the beginning of the protests we didn't intend to prevent the movement of cattle and meat at the plants, just to draw attention to what farmers were facing," continued Carmichael. "But that changed at Dungannon and Coleraine. As things got under way we decided to block them for two hours. We did the same on February 1 in Omagh and Derry."

In addition to getting higher prices and changing the grades, the protests also aimed to highlight the difference that farmers get in price in the north of Ireland and in Brit-

ain, where the price is £40—£80 more per head of cattle. According to an article in the Ulster Farmers Union (UFU) newspaper *Farm Week*, the gap in cattle prices between Northern Ireland and Britain has begun to drop to £50, following recent actions called by the UFU.

Kevin MacAuley of the Antrim Farmers Action Network said the price is still too low. "The meat plants have grown bigger and fatter, while their unfortunate beef farmer 'partners' are going broke," MacAuley said. He went on to condemn the importation of cattle from the Republic. The UFU is associated with the National Farmers Union in Britain.

NIAPA was formed in 1974 by farmers who thought that the UFU was not doing enough to fight for the interests of small farmers. "We're perceived as Irish nationalist, though we have never set out to be that," said Carmichael. "Rural poverty doesn't discriminate. We will help farmers regardless of their religion or their politics" he added. "We've invited Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party to speak at our rallies. All farms are hit by the crisis, even the larger farms to the east of the river Bann, which tend more to be Protestant-owned. Small farmers were never given access to loans, but bigger farms were and now they are struggling to repay them." Carmichael said farm debt in Northern Ireland is £520 million, half of which is owned by dairy farmers, meaning there is £1,000 of debt for every cow.

Other farmers in the north explained that the NIAPA actions only temporarily held back the decline in prices. Sean Quinn, a farmer with 200 cattle from Crossmaglen, Northern Ireland, said, "What really helped us were the actions the previous week in the Republic, although there has been little difference in the north for the price that we get. What we need are guaranteed prices for what we produce."

The incidence of BSE, or "mad cow disease," in Northern Ireland has been as low as in the Republic, and much lower than in Britain. However farmers in the north, unlike their counterparts in the Republic, are subjected to all the restrictions that were imposed on farmers in the rest of the UK, including being unable to sell any cattle more than 30 months old. Every animal has an ID tag on it, indicating where it came from. If a farmer is unable to get a price for cattle approaching 30 months, he ends up getting rid of the cattle for nothing, losing all the labor and resources that was put into raising it.

This ruling hits farmers like Quinn and others in the south Armagh area particularly hard. "We've totally lost our natural market just across the border in the south," said Peter Carragher, a Crossmaglen farmer and leader of the South Armagh Farmers and Residents Association. "It's hard to get cattle under 30 months to put on enough weight to sell for a good price. You end up grazing them less and spending more money on animal feed."

Henry Derry, who also farms in Crossmaglen, explained that since BSE the price he received for cattle had fallen from £1,100 to around £600 per animal. At the same time farmers' costs for everything from machinery to animal feed has gone up. Derry said that he thought that the 30-month ruling needed to be relaxed some.

"The truth is that UK agricultural policy doesn't suit farmers in Northern Ireland. Our interests lie with farmers in the south, where farm size is much more similar to that here," said Carmichael. "The average size for farms in the north is 33 hectares and in the south it is 29 hectares. But in Britain it is more than twice that at 70 hectares."

The crisis in agriculture in Northern Ireland is reflected in the decision of the Cookstown farmers market at the end of last

Continued on Page 12

Washington lifts limit on subsidy program, allowing rich farmers to pocket millions

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

U.S. agriculture secretary Daniel Glickman announced a change in the government's farm subsidy program that will put millions of dollars in the pockets of a handful of the richest growers and farm corporations.

Glickman in effect lifted a \$150,000 yearly maximum in cash subsidies by allowing growers to receive certificates that can be redeemed for government-held commodities. The growers can resell either the certificates or the commodities. The move was passed last fall with bipartisan backing.

Glickman, who said this decision opens the door to some "mighty big payments," noted the move "will be embarrassing to American agriculture." The *New York Times* said, "As many as 2,600 of the nation's biggest farms, including corporate operations, stand to reap millions of dollars in unlimited cash subsidies" under the program.

The agriculture department seeks to use the move to adjust a current program where farmers take out federal loans to grow crops and are allowed to give back some of the crop to the government rather than repay the loan. Under these rules farmers were forecast to turn over nearly a million bales of cotton to the government this year.

The National Cotton Council pushed for the change, saying, "From our perspective the best bet for all producers is to get the cotton out into the market."

The subsidy limit already was doubled this year from \$75,000 in 1999. Chuck Hassebrook of the Center for Rural Affairs in Nebraska observed that the move "helps the big operations push out the small."

Figures from Iowa on where farm subsidies go help illustrate class divisions in the countryside, as well as which class the programs benefit.

Between 1996 and 1998 farm owners and operators in Iowa received more than \$2 billion in farm subsidies, according to an Environmental Working Group report. The report broke down the payments as follows:

- Half of the funds, or \$1 billion, went to a wee 12 percent—mostly farm corporations.
- 51 percent of the state's farmers received less than \$6,000 each over that three-year period.
- 21 percent, or 29,000 farmers, got less than \$1,000 a year.
- 4,000 farmers received \$100 or less a year.

"While rich farmers got richer, thousands of other Iowa farmers got less money than a welfare recipient," said Environmental Working Group executive director Kenneth Cook. The "meaningless subsidies" of \$100 or less a year, Cook said, were just "enough to buy a single sack of high-quality corn seed that would cover two or three acres, but not enough to plant, fertilize, or harvest it."

Minnesota rally builds for March 21 farm action in Washington, D.C.



Militant/Michael Pennock

Some 1,000 farmers and their supporters participated in an upbeat March 1 protest against the growing economic crisis facing farmers. The event, called by the Minnesota Catholic Conference and the Minnesota Council of Churches, became a building spot for the March 21 Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C. The Minnesota Farmers Union projects several busloads, in addition to some farmers who are flying to the action. The event also drew Republican and Democratic party politicians who were grilled about their position on a range of farm issues and were booed when their answer was unsatisfactory. Some participants in the rally carried signs and leaflets promoting the protectionist campaign against genetically modified seeds.

Labour MP to run in London as independent

Livingstone's announcement for mayor rejects imposition of Blair candidate

BY CELIA PUGH

LONDON—Ken Livingstone broke with the Labour Party here March 6 and announced his candidacy for mayor of London as an independent. The move is part of a growing division over the course of the Labour government headed by Prime Minister Anthony Blair.

Livingstone, a long-standing Member of Parliament (MP), made the move after Frank Dobson refused to step aside as the Labour candidate. Dobson had been handpicked by Blair, who imposed him on the party despite overwhelming support for Livingstone. When announcing his campaign, Livingstone said he was running to uphold the "democratic rights" of the people of London following "blatant ballot rigging" during the Labour Party selection process.

The voting will take place May 4 in what is the first election for a mayor of London. A new London assembly will also be elected. The former Greater London Council (GLC) was abolished under the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher.

Dobson was announced as the Labour candidate February 20, after winning 51.5 percent of the vote in a rigged electoral college. Livingstone received 48.5 percent. *A Financial Times* editorial February 21 declared the result, "a dismal outcome" which "looks more like a defeat for Tony Blair."

Following his formal announcement, Livingstone was immediately suspended from the Labour Party and moves have been made to expel him from its ranks. Livingstone said he didn't think "there is any risk that this will split the party," and urged his supporters to stay in the party. He encouraged a "second preference" vote for Dobson, as part of a procedure used if no candidate wins a clear majority vote.

Overwhelming vote for Livingstone

Livingstone estimates that 80,000 people voted for him and 25,000 for Dobson in the balloting to choose the Labour candidate. Voting was organized in a three-part electoral college, which gave the 75 London MPs and Members of the European Parliament one-third of the vote. The MPs voted heavily for Dobson, while individual Labour Party members voted 60 percent and London members of trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party voted 72 percent in favour of Livingstone. Where unions balloted their members the Livingstone vote was higher. For example, the Transport and General



Militant/Phil Waterhouse

Support for Livingstone against the official Blair candidate reflected frustration over dashed hopes that a Labour government, with trade union links, would defend workers. Above, 100 firefighters and supporters picket in London February 29 to protest overtime and disciplinary threats against other firefighters (see article below).

Workers Union, one of the biggest in the United Kingdom, gave Livingstone 85 percent of votes cast in a relatively high turnout. Officials of another major union, the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, cast the union block vote for Dobson without a ballot of union members.

Before the vote the big business media devoted substantial time to vilify "Red Ken," the name Livingstone gained in the early 1980s when he was leader of the GLC. In the context of rising struggles against the Thatcher government, including the 1984-85 miners strike, which drew behind it a real social movement, Livingstone adopted a policy of low transport fares and invited Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams to the County Hall, the seat of the GLC. Today Livingstone stresses his agreement with Blair on all but the transport issue.

For two weeks after Dobson's win, debate in the big-business media focused on whether Livingstone should stand as an independent and risk expulsion from the Labour Party. An editorial in the right-leaning *Evening Standard* stated: "This newspaper has never wavered in its conviction that Mr. Livingstone is an unsuitable mayor.... Yet even many Londoners who re-

ject the old and discredited policies of Mr Livingstone rally to his cause as a maverick, the loner, an underdog, the one-man awkward squad against the New Labour machine."

A headline of a column in the *Evening Standard* by columnist Simon Jenkins read, "Stand, Ken and deliver us from this rotten system." The right-wing *Daily Mail* columnist Leo McKinty stated, "I would not vote for him if he was the only name on the ballot paper," but added, "Leaders might find them an irritant, but independents and mavericks are vital to political freedom." The liberal *Observer* ran an editorial headlined "Run, Ken, run for the good of everyone." *The Financial Times* and *The Economist* caution against Livingstone standing.

Within the labor movement support for Livingstone against the official Blair candidate reflected anger over dashed hopes that a Labour government, with trade union links, would offer a different course. The Labour Party won a landslide victory in the 1997 general election after 18 years of Conservative rule. It pledged to reverse falling expenditures on public National Health Service (NHS) and on education. But a London School of Economics study published

last August revealed that the Labour government was on course to bring public spending as a proportion of national income to its lowest level in 40 years.

Chancellor Gordon Brown insists on keeping a tight reign on public spending. New year media headlines were dominated by the collapse in the NHS, which was unable to cope with a seasonal increase in influenza. Long waiting lists, lack of beds, cancelled operations, and a shortage of nurses plague the system.

Labor resistance

On February 29 Prime Minister Blair denied the NHS crisis, blaming "alarmists" in the media for the public outcry. The main pro-Labour tabloid *The Mirror*, responded, "The press didn't invent this nightmare... the NHS is dying." In recent months there have been strikes by London train drivers and bus workers over hours and pay, student demonstrations against Labour government-imposed university fees, action by members of the Fire Brigades Union against forced overtime, and angry protests by family farmers against Labour farm policy.

Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, resistance continues in Ireland to London's refusal to sever ties of colonial rule. The Blair government's desire to keep devolution for Scotland and Wales under Westminster control in order to maintain the UK has been a bumpy road as well. The Scottish parliament has challenged Westminster on student fees, and asylum laws. Alun Michael, Blair's choice for first secretary of the Welsh assembly, was forced to resign February 9 after a vote of no confidence by the body. He was replaced by MP Rhodri Morgan, the candidate favoured by Labour Party members in Wales in the original election.

Debate on public transport system

A hotly debated issue in the London mayoral election is the funding of the crumbling, publicly run transport system. The official government line favors a joint partnership between public and private sectors. Livingstone advocates keeping the London Underground public but raising funds for investment from big business bond holders and from special taxes on motorists.

A conflict over the selection of the Conservative Party candidate for mayor reflects the deepening crises of the party. Jeffrey Archer, originally selected and backed by party leader William Hague, resigned following a public perjury scandal. Family values rhetoric almost scuppered the selection of the only credible Conservative contestant Steven Norris, who supports liberal reforms on gay rights and was subjected to a media frenzy over his private life. Underlying this crisis is a decline of the Conservative party, which is now openly divided on Britain's EU relations.

Celia Pugh is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union in London.

Ecuador Congress approves austerity plan

BY HILDA CUZCO

Popular and mass organizations in Ecuador are protesting the passage of legislation March 1 that replaces the country's currency with the U.S. dollar and a stiff government-imposed austerity program.

Ecuadorian president Gustavo Noboa made the proposal to Congress to change the currency, the sucre, to the dollar, a step initiated by his predecessor, who was thrown out of office after a mass upsurge by workers, peasants, and students threatened to topple the government.

Determined to implement austerity programs against working people, Noboa accused the labor leaders of disrupting measures needed to make the country attractive to foreign investors.

Labor, student, peasant, and indigenous organizations have voiced opposition to the new "dollarization" law, which sets the rate of exchange at 25,000 sucres to the dollar.

CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, is holding meetings to discuss what actions to take in response. "The president made a mistake with the dollarization and has begun to dig his own grave," said Salvador Quishpe, one of the CONAIE leaders. In a telephone interview from Quito, CONAIE official Blanca Chancoso said that mobilizations continue against the economic policies of the government in the cities of Guayaquil, Cuenca, and Quito.

The dollarization "will have a negative impact on working people in Ecuador," said Chancoso. "It will only benefit the big entrepreneurs. Poverty will increase and the

small farmers will go bankrupt."

Hospital workers in the province of Guayas went on strike as well. They are protesting the privatization of the Social Security system that covers hospitals and dispensaries, the doubling of insurance payments by individuals, and the lack of medicines and supplies needed to take care of patients.

Oil workers held a 13-hour stoppage March 3 against infringements by the dollarization law on their union rights. What started as a halt in production for technical adjustments ended in a labor protest.

Along with dollarization and austerity moves, the government plans to step up sales of key national industries to capitalists, including the power and phone companies. Responding to threats of labor actions, Noboa said, "I am not going to allow illegal walkouts and boycott actions that block progress of the country. Let the country understand this."

To advise the government on its course, Washington sent a high-level delegation to Quito at the end of February. Another delegation from Washington visited Quito in mid-February headed by Thomas Pickering, under secretary for political affairs in the State Department. Coinciding with the U.S. government's delegation, César Gaviria, general secretary of the Organization of American States, was in Quito. Approval of the austerity measures will open the road for another package of \$900 million in loans and further credit lines from imperialist governments and banks.

IMF acting director Stanley Fischer confirmed that there may be an agreement for a

financial loan package to Ecuador in a "matter of days," according to a March 4 Reuters report. Fischer said the loan will come from the IMF, the World Bank, and other lending institutions. The proposal to adopt the dollar "seems to be working," said Fischer.

Firefighters protest gov't threats

BY PHIL WATERHOUSE

LONDON—"Ritchie, Ritchie, Ritchie--Out, Out, Out," chanted 100 firefighters who carried a sea of placards reading, "Support the Homerton 11," as the local council met in the Southwark town hall.

The members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) rallied February 29 to back the fight of the Homerton 11, firefighters from the London borough of Hackney facing disciplinary action for supporting the union's ban on working overtime.

"Ritchie" is Tony Ritchie, the chair of the London Fire and Civil Defense Authority, a Southwark Councillor, and prominent member of the fire service employers on a National Joint Council with the FBU.

FBU member Nigel Bulmer said Ritchie has presided over huge cutbacks in the London fire service, slashing 1,200 jobs. According to Matt Wrack, FBU group secretary in East London, the attack on the Homerton firefighters is an

attempt to reverse union policy of not working prearranged overtime and not coming in to cover shifts. These gains were won nearly 25 years ago in a national strike. If the outcome of the tribunal hearing on the Homerton 11 is not satisfactory, said Wrack, a ballot for strike action may take place.

At an earlier rally, Andy Gilchrist, a national officer of FBU, said that the assault was a "well thought out and cynical attempt to break the union's overtime ban," and "part of a general attack on pay and conditions." At the Southwark rally FBU executive council member Mick Shaw warned, "If they want to make a name for themselves by taking on our 11 members, they will have a major fight on their hands." A national FBU demonstration is planned March 10.

Phil Waterhouse is a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers. Rose Knight, a member of the RMT, contributed to this article.

U.S. farmers say: 'We went to Cuba to learn how to fight'

BY JAMES HARRIS

HAVANA, Cuba—From February 12 to 18 six farmers from the United States visited Cuba, hosted by the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) of that Caribbean nation. The farmers have all been involved in struggles to defend their land against foreclosure and the exploitation they face as independent commodity producers.

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Several are members and leaders of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), which is leading a fight against the U.S. government for widespread discrimination by the Department of Agriculture against farmers who are Black.

The visit was organized in the United States by the Atlanta Network on Cuba, which applied for and received a license for the trip from the Secretary of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control. Washington bars most U.S. residents from traveling to Cuba under regulations adopted as part of its embargo of the country. The Food and Development Policy group, also known as Food First, also extended a license it has received to the farmers for the trip.

Saturday, February 12: An important moment for the tour occurred on the first day during our orientation meeting at the ANAP guest house. At this meeting Armando Rama, the head of international relations for ANAP, gave a brief outline of our schedule and the goals of ANAP. Rama is 37 years old and was at age 19 an internationalist volunteer in the Cuban campaign to defend Angola from invasion by the South African apartheid army in the 1980s.

After Rama finished his remarks, Eddie Slaughter gave a presentation on why the group had come to Cuba. The central theme of Slaughter's comments was that the reason they were in Cuba was to learn how to extend their fight and that they wanted to learn how to fight from those who were experienced in fighting the U.S. government. The other theme was the need for farmers to internationalize their struggle, and he wanted to discuss ways to achieve that goal. The other participants introduced themselves and explained their backgrounds and struggles.

Rama listened intently to what was being said. He responded that this was a historic delegation, the first of its kind. He explained that ANAP has relations with many groups but none have come expressing the need to join together in a fight against the U.S. government. We continued the discussion for about another two and a half hours. It was cut short only by the announcement of dinner.

Sunday, February 13: Several different events were scheduled in Matanzas prov-

ince, mainly in the city of Cárdenas. We attended a small rally by schoolchildren, demanding Elián González be returned to Cuba, where both Slaughter and Codario spoke. We met delegates to an ANAP regional conference who were electing delegates to the ANAP national congress in May, and visited Varadero beach.

The visit to Varadero was not quite what I expected, however. We did not swim. ANAP wanted to show the farmers the two different realities in Cuba. So we went to the beach and heard a presentation by Rama on the pros and cons of tourism, the need for Cuba to earn hard currency, what hard currency is, and the class divisions created by the use of the dollar. It was pretty good, and all the farmers got into the discussion on this aspect of Cuba that they had never really thought about before.

By the time we got back to the ANAP congress, it had long since adjourned and the peasants were celebrating a successful event. It helped us all get a little feel for the mass democratic nature of ANAP. The farmers couldn't help but notice and comment that the 70 or so peasants gathered at the meeting, and those at the party afterward, were their exact counterparts.

At first, the farmers kept asking their Cuban counterparts if it was true that their land could not be foreclosed on. After getting an immediate and unequivocal answer from a number of farmers that they cannot lose their land that question didn't come up any more.

Monday, February 14: We traveled about 20 miles out of the city of Havana and visited the Jesús Menéndez and Augusto Sandino cooperatives. The first is a Credit and Services Cooperative (CCS) and the other an Agricultural Production Cooperative (CPA). Both of these are among the most successful of their type, especially the CPA. We then went to the ANAP training center. As it turned out, in each place the director gave a brief history of the agrarian land reform, as well as a description of their specific work. We had a constant stream of questions and spent a great deal of time in each place. The farmers wanted to know exactly how everything worked—from how the co-op was organized, to different irrigation methods, and methods of disease control. They took extensive notes throughout the whole trip. Willie Head in particular filled two notebooks.

On our return to Havana we met with the president of ANAP, Orlando Lugo Fonte. He also gave us a history of the agrarian reform laws and a rundown on the Elián case. One virtue of verbal repetition is that we can all now give a fairly good outline of the two agrarian reforms, including why the second became necessary, and its results. During the discussion, the farmers presented the ANAP president with a T-shirt and some of the three suitcases of pencils, aspirins, and surgical gloves we had collected. This became our custom in each place, with a different farmer making the presentation each time. This meeting ended up focusing in on the Elián case.

One discussion we had each day was why everything we were seeing was impossible without the Cuban people making a revolution and defending it for more than 40 years. The farmers paid attention to small details and techniques—methods of irrigation, pest control, ways of keeping an old tractor working, etc. They were also greatly attracted to the human solidarity and unity they saw that enabled the Cuban farmers to continue producing with what they described as practically nothing.

One discussion was about plowing fields with oxen, for example. Seeing the use of oxen in Cuba gave rise to various ideas, such as maybe low technology was the way to go. We kept coming back to the fact that this was all possible only because they had made a revolution—that you had to make a revolution—to do any of it.

Striking hospital workers make gains in France



Militant/Nat London

Unions and France's minister in charge of the health-care system reached a tentative agreement March 1 as thousands of hospital workers protested in Paris. The deal reportedly adds 10 billion francs to the hospital budget over a three-year period and creates 12,000 new jobs. The unions will sign a contract March 13 if the workers approve the settlement. Above, demonstration of 10,000 hospital workers in Paris January 28. A national strike was called the same day. Workers in France have organized a series of strikes in response to budget cuts.

Tuesday, February 15: We met with a representative of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples. Much of the meeting centered on wage differentials in Cuba today due to the fact that some Cubans receive some of their salary in dollars not pesos. Afterward there was a press conference. It was a very successful event. There were about 30 people present, including CNN. It was covered in the Cuban daily *Granma*, and on Cuban TV. This immediately made the farmers widely recognized, and they were often greeted on the street by people who had seen them on TV or read about them in *Granma*—especially when they wore their T-shirts.

They revealed themselves as unflinching supporters of the Cuban Revolution, as well as people who hate the U.S. government for what it has done to them and to Cuba. All the farmers on the delegation began to refer to the fight of all small farmers, in addition to the fight of farmers who are Black.

The rest of the day was concentrated on introducing us to various practitioners of organic agriculture, such as a lab that specialized in organic pest control, and a family that is developing methods of food preservation, and making spices at home. They had an amazing garden on a tiny plot of land. The farmers again took great interest in it and extensive notes.

Wednesday, February 16: We visited the Institute of Plant Health and took in a lecture on how it works. Afterward, we went on a tour of what are called gardens in Havana. These are very impressive operations. They are run as cooperatives. The ones that we saw produce quite a lot of high-quality vegetables especially, as well as chickens, ducks, etc. They are operated by peasants and are full-time operations. The term garden does not quite apply to them in the U.S. sense. They are really urban farms.

Later that night, our translator and tour guide, who was a Protestant evangelist, convinced some of the group to visit a church service in Havana. It turned out the preacher was some blow-dried televangelist from Texas. One thing about the visit is that no one is going to tell anyone on our delegation that there is not freedom of religion in Cuba.

Thursday, February 17: We met with three representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba for about two and a half hours. The compañeros who are responsible for following political developments in the United States made presentations, including what they knew about the lawsuit the farmers had lodged against the government. They asked for an update. We were all surprised at how much they knew about it. Slaughter kicked off a report on

the current state of the lawsuit, and the need for the farmers to internationalize their struggle. The discussion then went into an exchange on Cuban society in general, with the farmers asking a lot of questions on the history of the revolution.

After the meeting at the Central Committee offices, we had a meeting across town at the Havana Martin Luther King Center, where we met with Rev. Raúl Suárez, the director.

After leaving the King Center, we went directly to the Museum of the Revolution. We only had about an hour to tour it. The hour was one of the tour's high points. The farmers kept saying that we should have scheduled more time for the museum, something that Rama had been urging us all to work to do. We had to be almost literally pushed out of the place.

That night we had a good-bye social. It was attended by our Cuban friends who had worked with us throughout the trip, two supporters from the United States, who were at the Havana International Book Fair, and leaders from ANAP. A high point of the event was the attendance of Luis Morejón, one of the Cuban youth who had come to Atlanta during a 1999 speaking tour in the United States. Morejón had visited the farmers while in Georgia, and his presence provoked quite an emotional response on both sides. It was a nice event.

After the dinner and party Martin Bourke, the director of Food First who had just arrived in Havana to prepare for a delegation coming from the United States the following week, joined us in a trip to a jazz club.

Friday, February 18: We went to a high school about an hour outside of Havana. This is another event that had a huge effect on the farmers for whom education and child rearing are primary issues of concern. The discipline, cheerfulness, general good health, and confidence of Cuban children is a striking feature of the revolution. We were almost late getting out to the airport because once again everyone wanted to stay to take pictures and ask questions.

Invite farmers to speak

The farmers who participated were Eddie Slaughter from Georgia, who is national vice president of BFAA; Willie Head, Gladys Williams, and Lee Dobbins, all from Georgia; Karl Butts from Florida; and Anna Marie Codario from New Jersey. If you would like to arrange speaking engagements for them contact the Atlanta Network on Cuba, P.O. Box 5560, Atlanta, GA 31107.

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Thousands march for affirmative action

Continued from front page

bers of high school students also took part. Union contingents with banners and handmade signs marked the action throughout the day. Among the most militant groups of workers were longshoremen who have recently been involved in battles against the bosses for union recognition and better wages and working conditions throughout Florida's east coast. Many of the protesters had taken part in other social struggles in the region.

"The future has no time for racism," said a handmade sign held by Manny Whyshoe, an electrician from Tallahassee and member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He had painted a clock on his placard marking the date and time the Tallahassee march began. "The winds of change are blowing again," Whyshoe said, reflecting the combative attitude of many protesters. "You see it in the numbers and the mood of the people. Here today, just like in South Carolina not too long ago." Whyshoe had driven with coworkers and friends to join the 50,000-strong march in Columbia, South Carolina, on Martin Luther King Day demanding the Confederate battle flag no longer be flown over that state's capitol building.

The Florida march was called by the Coalition of Conscience, among the principal sponsors of which are the state's AFL-CIO and NAACP. It was organized in response to an executive order Gov. John Ellis Bush issued in November eliminating affirmative action programs in college admissions in Florida's 10 public universities and in state contracts. The mass protest took place on the opening day of Florida's legislature, as Bush was delivering his state-of-the-state address. The Republican governor vowed to stick by his "One Florida" initiative, fueling the anger, and the determination to fight, of many protesters.

"It's not up to him to erase affirmative action with a stroke of his pen," said Rosa Peoples, who works at Florida's Department of Revenue and is a member of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). "He may not back off, as he says, but neither will we."

student also from the MDCC. Hilaire, Mareus, and other students had heard about the high school walkouts and other protests in the New York area in response to the acquittal of four cops who killed Amadou Diallo with 41 bullets a year ago. "Maybe we'll do the same," she said.

These students had traveled all night, taking the nine-hour bus ride from Miami. More than 50 buses came from Miami, the majority organized by AFSCME, the Teamsters, Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, and other trade unions. The International Longshoremen's Association organized three buses from Miami alone. Dozens of buses were chartered by the NAACP and churches in the Black community in Homestead, Opa Locka, and elsewhere in Dade County. About 20 buses came from Jacksonville and 18 from Orlando. Thousands more came with vans or drove their cars from throughout Florida, including many small towns in rural areas.

Workers take the day off

In many instances, large numbers of workers took a day or two off from work to come to Tallahassee, making their absence felt. Nearly 600, or 35 percent, of some 1,700 drivers of public school buses in Miami called off the job to join the march, for example. The 240 substitute drivers that school authorities were able to mobilize were not enough to fill the gap. School officials were surprised by the large number of drivers who used personal days off to go to Tallahassee. Thousands of students were late for classes on March 7 as a result. These drivers are organized by AFSCME. Absences were also a lot higher than usual among school bus drivers in Broward County, north of Miami.

Those arriving by buses organized by labor unions had a hearty breakfast paid for by the AFL-CIO in a huge parking lot of a dance club. Florida AFL-CIO president Marilyn Linard announced that about 5,000 union members came to the action. The largest contingent was 2,000 AFSCME members. Other unions represented included the American Federation of Teachers, United Auto Workers, United Steelworkers of



Militant/Linda Joyce

Service Employees International Union Local 362 members join March 7 rally of 45,000 to protest the 'Florida One' initiative that guts affirmative action.

battles that resulted in the overthrow of Jim Crow segregation in the South. Peoples said affirmative action was won as a result of those struggles. Later, in 1976, she and a dozen other state employees sued the state of Florida to win a measure of equality in hiring and promotions in state agencies, and scored a victory, "even though the judge never released the monetary settlement we were awarded," she said.

'Gratifying to see young people here'

Other workers described what it was like on the job before and after affirmative action was won. David Cromartie, Jr., a retired paperworker was among those who came with one bus, three vans, and several carloads from Panama City, Florida. He proudly displayed his lifetime membership card in the United Paperworkers International Union. He said that after working for United Paper for more than 30 years he and all his fellow workers who were Black had never been promoted beyond laborer jobs.

"Then in 1967, in Nashville, Mississippi, the union negotiated a memorandum of understanding that guaranteed equal opportunity for Black workers in promotions," Cromartie said. "After that, I became a wood chipper feeder, an evaporator operator, washer control room operator—all 14 classifications an hourly worker could qualify for and still remain in the union." Not long after those victories, Cromartie continued, "things somehow got weaker. Young people saw no reason to fight, it seemed. It's gratifying to see so many young people here today."

A number of protesters were emphatic about answering the claim by Governor Bush and other opponents of affirmative action that the racist discrimination of three decades ago is no longer a reality and that affirmative action programs today are simply "reverse discrimination."

"We've experienced '400 years of slavery and myriad forms of oppression, while affirmative action has been in place just since the end of the '60s,'" stated Manny Whyshoe. "And they tell us we have achieved equality in 30 years? Why is the poverty rate, and the infant mortality rate, and the median household income for Black families and other oppressed people getting worse and not better today?"

Others pointed out that the assault on affirmative action is part of the drive by the wealthy classes to justify their exploitation and to attempt to roll back workers' resistance and undermine growing unity among working people of all nationalities. "Affirmative action was meant to unite, no matter what the color of our skin," said Eddie McReed, a member of the International Association of Longshoremen (ILA) who works at the Port of Everglades in Ft. Lauderdale. "We see how much unity has meant for us in our strike," he pointed out, referring to the recent walkouts by dockworkers and truck drivers at ports along the East Coast. "Unity among our ranks and solidarity from others made it possible for us to force many boats [companies] to operate with union labor."

McReed said that the ILA is still picketing three companies at the Port of Everglades that are nonunion. "Before the strike we had more than 20 boats that were loading and unloading nonunion. Now it's down to three and we are still fighting." Large contingents of ILA members from Miami and Jacksonville, along with Ft. Lauderdale, were visible and loud during the march.

The overwhelming majority of the pro-

testers came from Florida. A couple of busloads came from Atlanta, organized by the NAACP, and one bus came from South Carolina. A few carloads of unionists also came from Alabama.

Stefanie Seguin, president of the University of Florida chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Gainesville, said that the fight to defeat One Florida is supported by most female students at her school. Several other NOW campus chapters organized contingents for the March 7 action.

Protesters held a variety of views on how to defend affirmative action. Conner Ravares, a student from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, said that quotas are needed to enforce affirmative action in hiring and education.

Most politicians and others who addressed the rally outside the state capital did not share that opinion. The president of the Florida NAACP said Bush wrongly accuses opponents of One Florida of wanting "racial quotas."

Featured speakers at the rally that culminated the march included Kweisi Mfume, president of the NAACP; Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League; Martin Luther King III, chairman of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; NOW president Patricia Ireland; comedian Dick Gregory; Gerald McEntee, president of AFSCME, who spoke on behalf of the AFL-CIO national leadership; and Democratic Party politician Jesse Jackson.

'Affirmative action is a worker issue'

The theme of most of their remarks was to place all the blame for the attacks on affirmative action and other social programs on Governor Bush and the Republican party and to get out the vote for the Democratic party in the November presidential elections. "Can you imagine," said U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown of Jacksonville, "what it would be like on Nov. 8 to wake up and open the paper and see that George W. is president of the United States? That is my worst nightmare. We got to go to the polls and vote those Bushes out!"

During his address to the state legislature, Bush evoked loud applause from Republican senators when he said that "the vast majority of Floridians favor elimination of all affirmative action programs." This comment gave the lie to Bush's claim that his executive order was intended to be a kinder and gentler version of the misnamed "Florida Civil Rights Initiative."

This is a referendum proposition that California businessman Ward Connerly and his local backers have announced they intend to place on the Florida ballot in the November elections. The day before the Tallahassee march, Connerly's supporters appeared before the state Supreme Court to get approval for the wording of their proposition, which would wipe out all state affirmative action programs. Connerly has spearheaded similar measures that won majority votes on state ballots in California and Washington.

"What we must keep in mind, is that Bush, Connerly, and their ilk may win some votes or ram down our throats some executive orders," said Eugene, a longshoreman from Jacksonville who asked that only his first name be used. "But affirmative action is not a Black issue, or a woman's issue. It's a worker issue. And we are the majority."

Rachele Fruit is a member of the International Association of Machinists in Miami.



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists banner at March 7 action

Peoples had joined the 2,000-strong march organized by Florida A&M university students in Tallahassee February 8.

Opposition forced public hearings

More than 4,000 had turned out for a public hearing in Miami February 3 to show their opposition to the so-called One Florida plan, and hundreds had turned up for an earlier similar hearing in Tampa. Bush had conceded those meetings after state representative Anthony Hill and state senator Kendrick Meek, both Democrats, staged a sit-in at the governor's office in mid-January demanding more public input into the matter.

"Bush discovered a lot more opposition than he expected," said Jean Mareus, president of the Haitian-Boukan club at the Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC), who came to Tallahassee with a busload of his fellow students from Miami. "We are 100 percent for affirmative action. Without it many of us would have never made it into any university, regardless of how capable we are."

"Even if the governor says no to our demands, after this march, we won't back off the struggle," said Elsie Hilaire, a nursing

America, United Food and Commercial Workers, American Postal Union, Service Employees International Union, and International Association of Machinists. The NAACP also distributed breakfast to more than 5,000 people.

As the march set off a little before noon, the atmosphere was festive and combative. Protesters sang and swayed as they marched up the hill on Apalachee Parkway toward the state capitol, sometimes seeking shelter under the old oak trees lining the highway to avoid the hot afternoon sun. "No more Bush," and "Affirmative action is here to stay!" many chanted.

In numerous interviews, industrial workers, teachers, small businessmen, and others, reiterated that they were not willing to give up affirmative action or other similar gains working people made in bloody battles since the late 1950s and 1960s. A good number of the participants were veterans of those earlier battles.

Rosa Peoples pointed to the fact that the March 7 demonstration fell exactly 35 years to the day of the "Bloody Sunday" march in Selma, Alabama. That's when state police launched a vicious assault on civil rights demonstrators, marking one of the historic

Cuban student leader builds April conference

BY ELIZABETH LARISCY
AND NAN BAILEY

LOS ANGELES—Cuban university student leader Roberto González visited here as part of a U.S. speaking tour to build a student conference in Havana next month.

González, a 24-year-old representative of the Federation of University Students (FEU) from Cuba, spoke to students and media here. González will visit five cities with Alejandro Pila, Third Secretary of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C. Pila, 27 years old, has been in the United States for three months.

The two Cuban leaders are inviting U.S. students to attend the Continental Latin America and Caribbean Students Organization (OCLAE) conference in Havana April 1-4.

The Los Angeles Coalition in Solidarity with Cuba organized for González and Pila to meet with nearly 300 students and others at five colleges and universities and at a middle school in the area. The two addressed the UCLA student government assembly and the Latin American Studies Department at the California State University at Los Angeles. The Progressive Student Organization at Occidental College hosted a meeting of 35 students, and teachers at Scripps College and Glendale Community College opened their classes to hold discussions.

They were interviewed by *La Opinión*, the largest Spanish-language newspaper in



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Third secretary of the Cuban Interests Section Alejandro Pila (at microphone) and Roberto González (left), a leader of the Federation of University Students of Cuba, speak in Los Angeles about the Latin American and Caribbean Students conference.

the city, and two radio stations. The week ended with a youthful public meeting of 50 at Loyola University Law School. Twenty-five students who had met González and Pila during the week met prior to the Loyola meeting to organize a contingent from the

area to attend the conference in Havana.

González explained that OCLAE was founded in 1966 in Cuba. Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara, both central leaders of the Cuban revolution, proposed the organization, he said, to bring together stu-

dents of Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss the reality in their countries. The meeting in April will be the first time students from the United States and Canada have been invited to attend.

"This will be an excellent opportunity for students from the United States to get to know Cuba and for Cubans to learn more about the U.S.," said González. He noted that "the situation for students in the continent is more difficult. With reduced budgets, college is becoming something only for the rich. We have observed that there are more protests by students throughout the continent in the last few years." He pointed to the 10-month strike that ended in February at the Autonomous University of Mexico, the largest university on the continent. "I have also heard from students here in Los Angeles how difficult it is to afford school," he said, explaining that in contrast Cuba has free education, including at the university level. "It is a mistake to think that students in the United States and Canada don't have problems. We want to let them know the reality of the rest of the continent. And we know a lot of people on the North American continent come from the other countries on the continent."

González said that the last OCLAE congress, which met in Brazil in 1996, had 500 participants. "This year we hope to have 5,000," he said. The call to organize this larger and broader OCLAE congress was put forward last August in Cuba at an international meeting entitled "Seminar on Youth and Neoliberalism."

Forty representatives from the FEU are spreading out to visit every country in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with Canada and the United States, to invite individuals and organizations to attend. A broad agenda is planned for the congress, including topics on the environment, national and cultural identity, economic development, and how students can participate in society.

"Our purpose is to present the reality of the continent, to tell the truth as Cuba has always done in its foreign policy," González said. Participants will be housed in dormitories.

When asked what it's like to be a student in Cuba, González explained, "The main thing we learn in Cuba is to sacrifice ourselves for other people, not to think of how to get rich as individuals. Even though we are poor, our priorities are education, health care, and security. When we graduate from the universities—which are free—we want to give back to society. The most important thing for us is the future for our children."

The OCLAE conference will be, as González said, "an excellent opportunity to share the reality of the continent" and discuss solutions. González and Pila have already visited New York. They will also speak in San Diego, Seattle, and Minneapolis over the next several days.

New volunteers join reprint project

BY HOLLY HARKNESS

ATLANTA—Since January 1, about 28 new volunteers from more than 10 cities have joined the effort to digitize Pathfinder Press's arsenal of revolutionary books and pamphlets. The new volunteers will be a big boost to the Reprint Project's goal of digitizing half of Pathfinder's titles by the end of this year.

More than 140 volunteers from seven countries have participated since the project was officially started two years ago. Sixty-eight books and pamphlets have been completed and put onto a CD for Pathfinder.

Many of the new recruits are responding to an appeal by the Socialist Workers Party for more help with the project. Warren Simons from New York reports that four party supporters "have volunteered to start working on the project, two volunteers have gotten reactivated, and a fifth supporter is thinking about joining."

"Our success in signing up new recruits flows in part from the enthusiasm generated by the successful completion of Scan2000," he added. Scan2000 was the project's 1999 goal to scan every Pathfinder title by the end of the year.

The new volunteers are also responding to world politics, just like the volunteers who have stayed with the project since its inception, in what has turned out to be an historic contribution to the worldwide development of the communist movement. "While the work of digitizing Pathfinder books is demanding, the reward of knowing that our efforts will enable these books to get into the hands of revolutionary workers as soon as they are needed in a fight to take the power away from the imperialists, is very, very great," one longtime volunteer said.

Now that the scanning is completed, volunteers must proofread and format the books. If these books have an index, it must be redone because the new format changes the page numbering. And all graphics, colorful covers, internal photographs and maps, must be digitized as well. Volunteers who were scanners are pitching in to help on other work teams. But more volunteers are needed.

Mark Weddleton from Des Moines sent this report after a recent SWP supporters meeting there: "Andrew and Joanne volunteered at the meeting to join the Project. I gave a little talk about the Reprint Project and showed them around the database. It gave me a renewed appreciation for the strength of the website. All the titles in process and the number of supporters you could see were involved was very impressive to them. It clearly conveyed it as an international team effort."

Nine months ago the Reprint Project

moved its work to a database on the Internet. This is an easier and more secure way to store the hundreds of files the volunteers create in the course of their work. It also allows all participants to follow the progress of the work.

While it is helpful for volunteers to be computer literate, it is not a prerequisite to participate. The steering committee for the Reprint Project recently made several recommendations to new volunteers without computers. The first was, buy a computer. "They are less expensive by far these days, and they are also getting more and more necessary for revolutionary socialists to use in our struggle to advance the ideas of socialism."

But until new volunteers buy a computer and learn how to use it, "computerless volunteers will have to find a volunteer in the same area to work with. Fortunately, most volunteers are part of supporter groups that meet monthly (or ought to!), thus making organization relatively easy."

Volunteers without computers

Volunteers without computers have been asked to help with proofreading. In Atlanta, Detroit, Miami, Montreal, New York, and Toronto volunteers with computers are helping those without to download assignments, print them out, enter corrections and upload completed work. They also handle the e-mail correspondence involved in dispatching assignments and deadlines.

The new wave of recruits into the project has also highlighted the importance of training. Simons explains how it is being organized in New York. "Maggie will give an introductory training session on Sunday before the NYC supporters' meeting. We will give [each new volunteer] a three-ring binder with the proofreading guidelines, all the helpful hint bulletins, a sheet listing some of the most common proofreading marks, and hopefully their first assignments. Maggie will show them a sample of some of her work and discuss how it's done. Then they can work on the assignment for a week or so and we'll organize another training session to discuss more concrete questions."

In Miami, supporters of the Socialist Workers Party are also organizing training for four volunteers who asked to join the project there. "First we had a session in front of Glen's computer, where we logged onto the website, and demonstrated how to find files, download, upload, and so on," said Maureen Coletta, a veteran volunteer from Miami.

"Next we printed out the guidelines and went through them together, section by section. We showed them what a typical assignment looks like and what some of the common errors are."

Phil Norris in Pittsburgh e-mailed to say that he is working with three new volunteers there. One of them had expressed interest in the project last November, but couldn't figure out how to get her computer to work properly. "We're going to get together next week for some computer lessons," Norris wrote.

In an e-mail to the new Pittsburgh volunteers Norris wrote, "Don't get overwhelmed. You might think that you volunteered for some little task. It really is a big project, and a complex project, with many different aspects. And it will take you a while to get used to it."

Simons said, "At the February supporters' meeting George, a new proofreader, told us that when he first started contemplating working on the project he was intimidated. But as he delved into it he realized that technical 'know how' wouldn't be a barrier to participating. If he didn't know how to do something or had a problem there were more experienced volunteers who willingly helped him."

Anyone who is interested in joining the project should contact Ruth Cheney at ruthchen@flash.net.

California teachers demand contract

BY MARK FRIEDMAN

SANTA MONICA, California—Students and faculty rallied here to demand a decent contract for Santa Monica College (SMC) teachers. As part of a series of protests, 100 students and faculty marched through the campus protesting the administration's "last and final" contract offer.

A key issue in the negotiations, which have been ongoing for two years, are the benefits the union demands be paid to the part-time faculty who teach more than 55 percent of the classes. There are 250 full-time faculty and 800 part-timers.

The union is also demanding that the part-time faculty be paid to hold office hours so that all students would have the advantage of extra help. The Santa Monica College Faculty Association is also fighting for back pay. Their fact sheet explains how the number of administrators has grown by over 100 percent. The college president's salary has grown by 15 percent, plus receiving more than \$20,000 a year for car and entertainment expenses. However, faculty salaries are the 34th lowest in the state.

In the spirited and vocal march around the campus, members of the California State Employees Association and students joined in. Student activists have prepared and distributed a fact sheet urging student support for the faculty. They point out that the Pub-

lic Employee Relations Board found the district guilty on three counts of unfair labor practices that include failure to provide information, threats of retaliation, and bad faith bargaining. At the time this article was submitted the district has refused to return to the bargaining table.

Sarah Smith, a student leader of the support committee, said: "Students at SMC should actively support the teachers in their contract struggle with the administration for a few reasons: first, because a lot of the issues that the faculty are fighting for would directly benefit students, and second, because it would help the teachers' efforts to increase their standard of living, and to be treated with more respect."

Smith continued "For me, it's also a matter of continuing the fight against an unjust economic system that allows this sort of despotic stuff to take place, in addition to the desire to see my professors achieve better standards of living."

Mark Friedman is a member of the International Association of Machinists

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Irish farmers protest

Continued from Page 7

year to end sheep and cattle auctions on all but one day of the week.

"Public transport facilities in rural areas don't really exist," said Carmichael. Farmers at Hilltown cattle market pointed to the growing cost and government tax on diesel prices that make it more expensive for farmers to transport cattle. Carmichael spends a growing proportion of his time in the NIAPA offices helping an increasing number of farmers fill out social security applications, and answering a farmers crisis hotline.

British rule 'bad news' for farmers

"We're back to direct rule by the British government and that is bad news for farmers, because the government doesn't give a damn," commented Niall Allen, the auctioneer at Cookstown cattle market. The British government has decided to suspend the recently elected Northern Ireland Assembly in order to press Irish republicans, who have been fighting to end British rule, to surrender their weapons. Allen's comments were echoed by a farm laborer at Hilltown cattle market who works on machinery on several farms, both north and south of the border. "They haven't even tried the new insti-

tutions," he said. "They should be reestablished and maybe we could make something of it."

In discussing whether cattle farmers could get better prices, Jim Moghan said that the main problem farmers face is the way that all the meat processing plants effectively act to control pricing. "Although they will deny it, the meat companies are a cartel," he said, "the price is always the same at each plant and whenever it changes at one of them it changes at all of them."

As a result of their recent actions in both the north and south, farmers have begun to get a little taste of their own collective power to wage a united fight to defend their incomes. "We're always being told that only around 13,000 of Northern Ireland's 30,000 farms are viable, that the other smaller farms aren't 'real farms,'" Carmichael said. "But we don't accept that. If farmers are producing something that people need they should be able to make a living from it."

Paul Davies is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union in Manchester, England. Debra Jacobs, a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers in Manchester, contributed to this article.

Rally condemns U.S. Navy

Continued from front page

sophomores from Westfield High in Westfield, Massachusetts, came to the demonstration. Adams was born and raised in Vieques. Her family left eight years ago "because there are no jobs there." "The Navy is taking people's lives," Colon said. She wasn't sure if she supported independence.

"Most of us here are for independence," said Julio Pabón, 19, a student at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Pabón was speaking about a group of eight students who organized to join the action from the campus. "I heard about the protest

on the Internet and decided to get some friends together and go."

Sajj Rahman, 18, is also a member of this group. "There are many organizations represented in our group—La Casas Albizu Campos, Black and Latino Brotherhood, and Students Against And Reforming Corporations," Rahman said. "I think Cuba is one place where they can stand up to the United States."

Brock Satter is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

Thousands in Puerto Rico march for statehood

BY RON RICHARDS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—Tens of thousands of people rallied here on March 5 to celebrate their U.S. citizenship. The march was called by the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP) to counter what they called the "separatist" message of the February 21 action of 85,000 opposed to the resumption of bombing by the U.S. Navy on Vieques.

Orlando Parga, a PNP legislator, had proposed the march some months ago but the party leadership never took the idea seriously until the success of the Vieques march. As part of preparations to enter World War I, U.S. citizenship was extended to Puerto Ricans on March 2, 1917.

The north side of the capitol was a sea of U.S. flags and a few Puerto Rican flags.

The official police estimate put the size of the march at 90,000, which is 5,000 larger than their estimate of the pro-Vieques march. The estimate by the police has been questioned in the press.

—CALENDAR—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Politics of Chicano Liberation. Book signing and presentation by author and Socialist Workers Party leader Olga Rodríguez. Sat., March 18, 8:30 p.m. *Espresso mi Cultura Bookstore, 5665 Hollywood Blvd. For more information: (323) 461-0808.*

OHIO

Mansfield

Join Locked-Out USWA Local 169 members at a Noon Rally. Sat., March 25. *Town Square. For more information, call Local 169 at (419) 522-9375.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Rally for Rural America. Mon., March 20, town hall meeting on the rural crisis, 2:00-5:00 p.m. Tues., March 21, rally at U.S. Capitol, 12:00 Noon. Sponsored by the National Farmers Union (NFU). *For more information: (202) 314-3103.*

Carlos Romero was one of the main speakers at the rally. He said that the Spanish had left Puerto Rico impoverished. By contrast, the invasion of the United States in 1898 has been good for the island.

Where to find Pathfinder books and distributors of the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, *New International*, *Nouvelle Internationale*, *Nueva Internacional* and *Ny International*.

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MISSOURI: St. Louis: Box 19166, 2910 Meramec Street. Zip 63118. Tel: (314) 924-

200 rally against Prop. 21



Militant/Carole Lesnick

March 4 rally in Los Angeles against the Youth Crime Initiative, Proposition 21, which passed by 62 percent of the vote on March 7 ballot. The measure attacks democratic rights, including permitting cops to wiretap those they decide are gang members and allowing youth charged with some felonies to be tried as adults. Proposition 22, voted up by 63 percent, bans same-sex marriage in California.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Politics of Chicano Liberation. Speaker: Olga Rodríguez, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 17, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$5. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

Jail Cops Who Killed Amadou Diallo: Fight Police Brutality. Speakers: Representative, Next Movement; Brock Satter, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 17, 7:30 p.m. Codman Square 683 Washington St. Dorchester. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 282-2254.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

Northern Ireland; Protest British Reimposition of Direct Rule! Sat., March 18 at 7:30 p.m. 711 E. Passyunk Ave. (2 blocks south of South St. at 5th street). Donation: \$4. Tel: (215)

627-1237.

CANADA

Vancouver

Building the Communist Movement: Celebrate the publication of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*; and *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*. Speaker: Beverly Bernardo, Communist League. Fri., March 17, 7:30 p.m. 4321 Fraser St. Tel: (604) 872-8343.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

The Irish Freedom Struggle Today: No to London's Direct Rule of Northern Ireland. Sat., March 18, 7:00 p.m. Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (3) 365 6055.

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Two conflicting world views, two conflicting classes

The excerpt below is taken from "Youth and the Communist Movement," a report given at a special congress of the communist movement in the United Kingdom held over the June 27-28 weekend in 1992. The entire talk appears in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

There are only two conflicting views of the world today that are of basic interest or importance.

According to one view, there is no question that since the events of 1989-90, the "West" is well along the way to conquering the "East." Recognizing that there will inevitably be some difficulties, the proponents of this view believe that capitalism will triumph in all the workers states where the Stalinist regimes have crumbled; capital will

from the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder*

prevail worldwide. American "restructuring" and "cost-cutting" will sweep the world. Some go as far as saying that this triumph of what they call "democratic capitalism," or "liberal democracy," represents the "end of history." Much will change in centuries to come, they say, and there may even still be wars, but humanity has at last settled on the global social system that will prevail through the ages.

To this communists counterpose our world view. What capitalism has in store is not a long wave of economic expansion and political democracy, but worldwide depression, deepening social crisis and the rise of Bonapartism, increasing interimperialist conflicts, and the march toward fascism and



"According to the first view, the working class is finished as a factor for revolutionary change.... Communists counterpose our conviction that the workers' fight for socialism is nowhere close to having been resolved." Above, 220,000 auto workers, members of IG Metall in Germany, wage "warning strikes" early last year for higher wages.

World War III. Moreover, what disintegrated in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was not socialism; these Stalinist regimes were the transmission belts within the workers movement of capitalist values and pressures against the toilers in those horribly deformed workers states and worldwide. What the future holds is growing resistance by working people to the pressures and conflicts generated by capitalism. That struggle will bring the workers of the world together to fight for their interests, which are the interests of the great majority of humankind.

According to the first view, there is a new rise of nationalism worldwide that has begun to dominate politics and will continue to do so in the decades ahead. Ethnic and religious conflicts, including the specter of "Islamic fundamentalism" in the "East," will tear peoples apart and lead to new horrors

around the globe.

To that communists counterpose our view: the soviet alternative, *soviet power*—such as the world witnessed during the opening years of the Russian revolution. The historic line of march of our class is to build a socialist world, in which people of all national origins, languages, and skin colors work together—as free men and women—in a world without borders, nationalities, or "ethnic" identities.

According to the first view, the working class is finished as a factor for revolutionary change in the world. Socialism is finished; communism is finished. The rulers do not even have to worry about them anymore, and the toiling majority should now place this chapter behind them.

To that communists counterpose our conviction that the workers' fight for socialism is nowhere close to having been resolved.

A different stage in working-class radicalization

We are reprinting below an excerpt from *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*, a companion volume to *Capitalism's World Disorder*. In the book Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes discusses the turn to the industrial working class and its unions that the party began in the late 1970s, and the political changes that made possible that decisive shift in orientation by the communist vanguard.

The passage below is excerpted from "Prospects for Socialism in America," a resolution adopted by the SWP at its 1975 convention. The book is copyright © 1994 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

The effects of the combined social and economic shocks of the last half decade, coming on top of the changes in attitudes wrought by the movements of social protest and the radicalization of the 1960s and 1970s, have brought us to the threshold of a new period in the transformation of the political consciousness of the American working class.

A different stage in the process of radicalization is opening; new types of struggles are coming onto the agenda.

This resolution examines on a world scale the roots and the various components of the crisis of American capitalism. These are compared and contrasted both to the post-World War II period of capitalist economic boom and political reaction, and to the depression and labor radicalization of the 1930s. The goal is to explain the dilemma faced by the ruling class, the structural and ideological changes taking place in the American working class and among its allies, and the revolutionary perspective inherent in the radicalization of the working class that is just beginning to unfold.

In the three decades since World War II, recessions have occurred in each of the major capitalist powers. Each of these separate slumps, however, was cushioned by the fact that industrialization, productivity, employment, and trade continued to run their expansionary course in at least several

other capitalist countries. The current American depression is not only the longest and deepest of the six U.S. postwar slumps; more important, it is a component part of the first world recession since 1937-38, simultaneously affecting all the major capitalist economies.

This recession on a world scale is a product of the increasing exhaustion of many of the motor forces that fed the quarter-century world capitalist boom—for instance, the reconstruction of European and Japanese industry, the massive growth of the automobile and related industries in the 1950s and 1960s, the mechanization, automation, and computerization of whole new branches of industry.

The expansionary stimulants of deficit financing and massive credit growth, used to help bring capitalist economies out of slumps in the last quarter of a century, have turned into perilous measures. Government-engineered inflation is less effective and more dangerous than ever before as a means of bringing capitalist economies out of a recession. It can threaten to soar out of control even in the midst of a depression.

The war in Indochina brought clearly into the open the shift in the world relationship of class forces against imperialism. It demonstrated the new limits imposed on the use of American imperialism's massive military machine. The imperialist giant today finds itself increasingly hobbled not only by the nuclear power of the Soviet Union, but by the absence of semicolonial allies and clients with solid popular support in their own countries, by the drain on U.S. capital that propping up dictatorial regimes entails, and by political opposition from the American people.

The defeat in Southeast Asia was a setback of historic proportions for U.S. capitalism.

Meanwhile, in Europe, the powerful working-class offensives registered in the May 1968 prerevolutionary upsurge in France and the "creeping May" in Italy in the autumn of 1969 demonstrated the growing trend toward broad social crises in the heart of the imperialist powers of Europe. This trend has been reconfirmed by the revolutionary ferment that exploded in Portugal in the spring of 1974.

From being an allied reserve, offering military, political, and economic support for embattled American imperialism vis-à-vis the colonial revolution and the workers states, sectors of European capital are becoming an additional source of weakness.

As the oil crisis, the prelude to the 1974-75 depression, demonstrated anew, American imperialism remains by far the single most powerful force in the world capitalist arena. Its economic output alone is as great as all the other major capitalist powers put together.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



March 21, 1975

There was a new aspect to the International Women's Day marches that took place around the country this year on March 8. For the first time in decades the demonstrations were led by trade-union women.

In New York City 3,000 marched down Fifth Avenue on this day commemorating the international struggle of working women. The march was led by women from the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees District 1199 and from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1707.

The march and rally were organized by a coalition of some 50 organizations. Speakers demanded passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, an end to attacks on the right to abortion, and child-care services. Almost all the speakers addressed themselves to the current economic crisis.

In Minneapolis more than 500 demonstrators marched through the downtown streets and past the office building of Cargill, Inc., a major food monopoly, in protest of high food prices.

In Washington, D.C., 200 trade unionists picketed the capitol protesting unemployment and inflation.

The Women's Day march of 150 in Chi-

Although we are still in the very early stages, the working class is moving toward big class battles in the decades ahead, in the course of which workers will have the best chance in history to conquer power and establish workers and farmers governments. There is no guarantee that the working class will succeed in this round, but we will have our chance on a world scale to overturn capitalist social relations once and for all and open a socialist future.

Above all, the outcome will be shaped by what worker-bolsheviks do *today* to utilize the space that exists to carry out communist politics. That will determine whether we have the kind of disciplined workers parties, whose cadres have internalized the necessary proletarian norms and values, that can respond and grow rapidly in face of explosive political developments.

Surely, this was the glory of the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership long before 1917. Almost no one in the international bourgeoisie, or in the increasingly bankrupt leadership of the world Socialist movement of that time, thought that this small political current in Russia would ever amount to anything. But it never occurred to the Bolsheviks that they were doing anything else but preparing to lead the workers and peasants to storm heaven, as Marx said of the Paris Communards of 1871, and to emerge victorious. The Bolsheviks did not rely on any apparatus anywhere in the world for assistance; they based themselves on political and financial support from factory workers and other toilers in Russia.

After the October 1917 revolution, the Bolsheviks were looked at around the world as if they were men and women from nowhere. But the Bolsheviks themselves knew that this was far from the truth. Because they knew something that no one in the bourgeoisie in Russia or anywhere else knew or was interested in. The Bolsheviks knew what was happening in the working class in Russia. They knew that nothing had been settled—not by tsarist repression, not by the defeat of the 1905 revolution, not by the capitalist profits that were accompanying the industrial transformation of Russia. They were solidly based among worker-bolsheviks in the factories—politically trained cadres who used the space they had in the working class. They knew their class would have its chance.

So when the revolutionary crisis broke out in early 1917 under the devastating strains of the imperialist slaughter, the Bolsheviks were able within months to take the leadership of millions of workers and peasants in struggle and lead them to the conquest of power.

There was no guarantee for the Bolsheviks then, and there is none for us now. But it can be done. It was done in Russia, and the way the Bolsheviks did it is what we seek to emulate.

cago, called by the Chicago chapter of CLUW, raised the demands: "Jobs for all, fight layoffs, full equality for women; no wage controls, roll back prices; and useful jobs at union wages.



March 20, 1950

BERKELEY, Cal., March 8—A storm of opposition has broken out on the campus here against the ultimatum issued Feb. 24 by the Regents of the University of California to 11,000 employees to sign a special "non-communist" oath of "loyalty" by April 30 or face dismissal. Faculty members and students alike have been aroused to mass protest by this threat to academic freedom from the bankers, business men and corporation lawyers who control the Board of Regents.

The firmest and most courageous stand has been taken by a group of non-tenure faculty members, including teaching and research assistants, represented by the Non-Senate Academic Employers. On March 3 this body voted 300 to 1 to strike if any member of the group is fired for refusal to take the oath. They also voted "unified action" with the senior professors in the Academic Senate.

Organize immigrant workers . . .

Not waiting for legal status to be bestowed upon them, tens of thousands of immigrant workers are in the middle of struggles that are strengthening the working class in country after country around the world. The decision of the AFL-CIO to amend its reactionary anti-immigrant policy is a recognition of the fact that only by organizing immigrant workers can the ranks of the unions in the United States increase.

The slogan of a fighting labor movement should be: "Organize immigrant workers into the unions now!" This can be a big step toward ending the divisions between "legal" and "illegal," and native and foreign-born that can cripple union power and the potential for struggle by working people. The anti-immigrant campaigns by the employers, their governments, and rightist forces, such as Patrick Buchanan in the United States and Jörg Haider in Austria, are deadly threats to all working people.

Continuing to deny immigrants equal rights subjects a layer of the working population to extreme exploitation at the hands of the bosses, denial of rights by the government, and victimization through summary deportations and rightist attacks.

Despite their intentions, the propertied families the world over are internationalizing the working class. The capitalists do not set out to do most of the things that inevitably result from the way their system works. But from one end of the globe to the other, toilers are migrating in larger numbers than ever before in human history, drawn by the changing needs of capital. Once in the United States,

New Zealand, Austria, or other imperialist centers, the employers seek to make super profits off their labor by justifying a second-class status for immigrants. The bosses then begin organizing to deny them schooling, medical care, and social benefits.

Vanguard militants and all working people should welcome this internationalization of our class and the crumbling of borders. Despite the intentions of the capitalists, breaking down the borders weakens the employer-fostered competition between workers of different nationalities, and widens the cultural scope and world view of the working class. It brings new experiences into the workers movement and strengthens the potential fighting power of our organizations.

Immigrant workers are showing by their actions that this is true. Fighting for equal rights for immigrants and the ending of all aspects of second-class status imposed on them under capitalism will be a big blow to the employers, and widens the possibilities for expanding and making stronger the unions today. It will increase the potential for the unions to "act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interests of its complete emancipation." This is the course Karl Marx, the founder of scientific socialism and a determined and unswerving leader of the early working-class movement, outlined in "Trade Unions: their past, present, and future," a resolution adopted by the first congress of the International Working Men's Association in 1866. This course holds true today.

and show union power on the job

There is one overriding fact about the employer's offensive against the unions and working people: they are pushing workers to the brink on the conditions of work and life on the job. From longer hours, to the pace and intensity of work, to the gutting of minimal safety procedures, to plain backbreaking labor, the bosses are making it nearly physically impossible for tens of millions to keep working.

There is a pressing need to bring union power to bear on the job to gain control over the pace of work and the ability of the bosses to crank up the pace of production at will. The seeds of the ability to do so lie in the growing number of strikes and skirmishes where workers insist the main issue is not wages, even though that is important, but dignity and respect. They demand to be treated by the bosses like human beings, not animals.

Productivity figures released by the Labor Department graphically show what is going on: workers produced 3 percent more per hour in 1999 than the previous year; for the fourth quarter the figure was an astounding 6.4 percent. This comes directly from the harsher conditions of labor that workers face, and speedup on the job that is tearing apart the bodies and lives of tens of millions.

In *Capitalism's World Disorder*, Jack Barnes makes the point that in many industries "thousands of immigrant workers and other workers who have become desperate for a job offer their limbs in exchange for a weekly wage. That is the bargain in more and more meatpacking plants in the country. The frequency of carpal tunnel and other repetitive motion injuries is staggering. Normal use of hands, shoulders, necks, vertebrae, and tendons is lost—sometimes forever. Not to mention injuries from knives and machinery. It is not just selling your labor power; it is selling life and limb.

"The working class fought bloody battles over the last two centuries, as industrial capitalism expanded, to make sure we would not face these kinds of conditions as a norm. We built unions and fought to end all forms of physical bondage. We fought for laws that took away the "right" for anyone to sell themselves—or any little piece of themselves. It was *working people* who fought for this: for human beings to not be treated like commodities."

The potential to wage this struggle today can be seen in countless ways: from longshoremen fighting the extension of nonunion labor on the docks, to women taking their place in labor struggles in steel and other industries, to the efforts to win union recognition by textile workers, truckers, airline workers, and others.

Such a struggle can also strengthen the possibilities for workers and farmers to defend Social Security, which is also under attack by the bipartisan gang in Washington. Asserting our humanity, our right to cradle-to-grave protection against the vicissitudes of life under capitalism, and to a guaranteed income in retirement free from the fortunes of a particular company or union retirement plan, are central to the fight to keep the capitalists from tearing the working class apart.

Government officials complain that Social Security was never meant for a time when workers would live much past retirement. The fact that workers can, on the average, live past retirement age is a conquest of the struggles of working people, not a change of heart by the employers—who are, in fact, driving in the opposite direction. Charting a course to use union power on the job is another front in transforming the unions into revolutionary instruments of the working class—and organizations that champion every cause that advances the emancipation of humanity from the brutal system of capitalism.

UNION NEWS BRIEFS

Labor productivity jumps

The U.S. Labor Department released figures March 7 citing a huge jump in labor productivity for the fourth quarter of 1999 as labor costs fell. Productivity, a measure of output for each hour worked, rose at an annual rate of 6.4 percent in the fourth quarter, up from 5 percent in the third quarter. Productivity grew 3 percent for the year as a whole. Both figures are the highest since 1992.

Boeing declares strike impasse

The Boeing company declared an impasse in talks with striking engineers and technical workers, saying it would impose the terms of its final offer on the employees. The Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) said they are considering asking the Clinton administration to suspend the company's authority to certify airliners.

Blast kills three in Virginia plant

An explosion March 5 at the New River Castings factory, in Radford, Virginia, killed three workers and hospitalized six others. The blast created a hole the size of a football field in the center of the plant, which makes transmissions and other iron parts for the auto industry. Two days earlier workers were evacuated from the building because of a gas leak.

Wal-Mart moves against union

Wal-Mart announced it was closing its meat-cutting operations in 180 stores in six states after workers in its Jacksonville, Texas, store voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers union. The meat cutters voted 7 to 3 in favor of union representation, the first at the giant retail distributor. Wal-Mart, notoriously antiunion, denied the closure was related to the union vote.

Court ends rail walkout

A federal district court ordered striking railroad workers back on the job after a four-hour stoppage at Union Pacific Railroad February 24. The workers, members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE), walked out after the bosses unilaterally decided to close a shop that makes track in Laramie, Wyoming. The judge also ordered the company to not lay off any workers at the plant.

Amtrak settles discrimination suit

The commuter railroad Amtrak settled a race discrimination suit March 3, filed on behalf of African-American applicants for BMW jobs on the company's Northeast Corridor. The company agreed to pay \$16 million and implement changes in its personnel policies.

Students protest college support of racist group

BY BILL SCHMIT
AND JAY PARADISO

ANN ARBOR, Michigan—Since February 6, eight students at the University of Michigan (UM) have been occupying the meeting quarters of the privileged Michigamua society, a by-invitation-only club whose practices are offensive and racist against Native Americans.

"They are making a mockery of what we call sacred," said Karen Snake, a protester and member of the Native American community. "They've mistreated Native people since they set up this school." The Students of Color Coalition (SCC), which has led the demonstration, is opposed to the existence of the group, and demands that the university cease giving special support to the club.

Since the occupation, demonstrations have been called to support the SCC demands, including a February 19 rally sponsored by The Committee to Challenge Racism Against Indigenous People, which drew between 250 and 300 people. The SCC has also hosted parties and sleepovers that have drawn hundreds of supporters inside the Michigan Union building. Students have also organized to give tours of the occupied room to more than 2,000 people.

The students are especially angered by the use of racial stereotyping by Michigamua. Members of the society take mock Indian names. On the wall of the meeting room, decorated to resemble a wigwam, hangs a plaque dedicated to a past member, Fielding "the great scalper" Yost. A current UM hockey coach and alumnus of the organization, Gordon Berenson, goes by the name "Red Scalper."

The students also found many Native American artifacts. These include arrows and spearheads that date back an estimated 5,000 years, a pipe and a rare needlework that was found at the bottom of a water damaged box under a pile of papers. One of the demands of the occupants is that the items be repatriated to the Native American community.

Also insulting to the students is UM's support of Michigamua through exclusive, rent-free provision of space atop the Michigan Union building. The group does not have to reapply for recognition each year like all the other campus groups.

A good-old-boys club

Michigamua is a good-old-boys club that dates back to 1902. Women were admitted only last fall. The membership of a given year is called a "tribe." It consists of 25 seniors who recruit 25 other students to make up the next years "tribe." Michigamua's alumni include former president Gerald Ford and former Michigan Supreme Court justice Frank Murphy. Many of the university faculty and administration have been members, honorary members, or have had other connections with Michigamua.

The fight against the club by Native Americans and other students goes back three decades. In 1972, a group of Native Americans informed Michigamua and the University of Michigan of their opposition to the group's racist practices. This was done again in 1978 and 1986. In 1989, a legal agreement between the University of Michigan, Michigamua, and a Native American complainant was signed, which read in part, "Michigamua does hereby eliminate all reference to Native American culture and pseudo culture and extensions and parodies thereof, with the one exemption being the name, Michigamua, for now and forever."

Over time, however, it became apparent that Michigamua was not abiding by the 1989 agreement, and their activities on campus had not changed. One student occupying the club, Colette Routel, said, "There were always reports over the years about drumming coming from the Student Union where the Michigamua room is located. There was a totem pole up on north campus, and there was a tomahawk on central campus." In 1997 the totem pole and the tomahawk were taken down. During the negotiations to remove them, certain Native American students saw the Michigamua meeting room and also saw that the Native American artifacts and decorations had not been removed.

Students told us that they formed the SCC to fight around issues such as this in 1999. Since the occupation began, they have published two issues of *Voices from the Tower*, their own independent publication designed to explain their views and host discussion on the occupation and Native American struggles. On February 4 a group of SCC members attempted to drop off a petition to Lee Bollinger, the university president. The newsletter passed out by the SCC details how they were harassed and hassled by the campus administration as well as public safety. Two days later, the students began the occupation.

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Unions give support to Overnite strikers

BY DAN FEIN

ATLANTA—Overnite strikers and their supporters in the labor movement rallied and held a mass picket at the Overnite Transportation Company here March 2. At the action workers expressed their determination to continue the struggle.

Some 2,000 drivers, dockworkers, and maintenance workers across the United States began a strike against Overnite on October 24. Overnite is the sixth largest U.S. trucking company and the largest one that is unorganized. It is owned by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Many of the strikers, members of Teamsters Local 728, have gotten other jobs and a majority of the rally participants were from other unions such as the Carpenters and Machinists.

In February, the Department of Transportation, responding to a company complaint, forced the strikers to move their picket tent across the street from the entrance to the terminal. It had been right next to it.

Before the rally a mass picket was organized in front of the terminal. Overnite trucks were allowed to leave and enter the premises, although some were delayed during the event. One scab driver trying to exit the terminal left his truck to complain to company security. DeKalb County police were on the scene within minutes and the pickets made room for the trucks with some loud shouting at the scab drivers.

"I loved the rally. We'll be here until we win a contract. Overnite only cares about the big shots, not the drivers and dockworkers," said striker Jerry Wilson.

"It's not easy living on their retirement. I just got tired of all the favoritism. There was too much b.s.," stated Jimmy Cowden, who retired from Overnite a year and a half ago.

"The strike is still strong," said Frank Williams who has 28 years at Overnite. "We're dedicated to staying out until we get a contract. The ambulatory picketing is having an effect. We follow a truck and picket the facility. A driver from another company who sees us won't cross the picket line. The idea is for Overnite's customers to stop using Overnite for their deliveries. We meet around 8:00 a.m. to follow the trucks." Williams said he was part of the Teamster contingent at the Atlanta King Day march January 17.

"I didn't see other unions and other struggles going on until I was hit with this strike," he said.

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BY ALYSON KENNEDY

ST. LOUIS—Teamsters from the many

trucking terminals here continue to organize a determined fight to win union recognition at Overnite. Members of Teamsters Local 600 have maintained daily picket lines at the two Overnite terminals since the beginning of the strike.

The Teamsters take up weekly collections at the terminals. Union members at Consolidated Freight continue to spearhead daily caravans of trucks in front of Overnite. Every morning they gather and drive slowly by the terminal blaring horns in solidarity with the strike. Recently a rally of 200 members from the Teamsters Joint Council took place in front of Overnite.

Unionists throughout the St. Louis area continue to back the strike. On February 28 about a dozen union members gathered at the picket shack following a meeting earlier that evening of the St. Louis Rail Labor Coalition. The rail workers were from the United Transportation Union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the clerks union, and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way. They were joined at the picket line by several workers from United Steelworkers of America, the International Association of Machinists, and the garment and tex-



Militant/Frankie Travis

Rail workers from St. Louis show solidarity at Overnite picket line

tile workers union.

David Cassidy, who is a member of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way at Norfolk Southern Railroad, said the Rail Labor Coalition was formed in 1995 during union contract negotiations. "We deal with railroads every day. They are getting a taste of it," said Robert Taylor in an inter-

view. Taylor works for Union Pacific railroad. Charles Bolam, vice president of the coalition, said this is the third time the Rail Labor Coalition has brought food or firewood to the picket line. "We want to let them know that we think that their fight is important. Every time nonunion wins, it makes all unions weaker," he said.

Flight attendants stand up to US Airways threat

BY REBECCA ARENSON AND NANCY COLE

PHILADELPHIA—Flight attendants at US Airways refused binding arbitration at the end of February, triggering the 30-day cooling-off period mandated by the Railway Labor Act. If no agreement is reached by March 25, the nearly 10,000 members of the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) at the country's sixth largest airline are free to begin a series of actions they have dubbed CHAOS, or Create Havoc Around Our System.

US Airways immediately responded with a declaration that it would shut down operations on March 25 if no agreement had been reached. The union describes CHAOS as anything from mass, intermittent, or rolling strikes, to rallies and protests and an extensive media campaign.

"US Airways continues to demand that flight attendants accept a package of cuts that it calls 'parity plus 1 percent,' even though posting profits in excess of \$2 billion over the last five years," the AFA explained February 29. "However, the airline has refused to fully define that package of cuts in contract talks, including never putting a wage proposal on the negotiating table

for flight attendants to consider." In addition, the union said, "US Airways hasn't provided flight attendants raises in over four years and refuses to apply the Family and Medical Leave Act to flight attendants. Sixteen contract sections remain unresolved, including pay, benefits, retirement and work rules."

Charging the AFA's intent is to pressure the company by "eroding the confidence of our customers and demoralizing the other employee groups," the letter declares the company is left with no choice but to shut down, an action they explain, could "lead to the furlough of many employees."

Darrell Howerton, a flight attendant for 10 years based in Philadelphia, explains why flight attendants are so adamant against parity: "We can't put our livelihoods and work rules in the hands of four other carriers with so many unknowns. Delta flight attendants have no union and Northwest and American have no contracts." Wolf "is trying to bust our union," Howerton says, "but he can't do it. We had a 99 percent strike vote last December because we're fed up."

There is no question, however, that the company's divisive campaign has confused many US Airways workers and sapped the

spirit of solidarity. Some union members argue that since they accepted the parity scheme then so should the flight attendants. But others can see through these antiunion moves and realize that any fight that challenges the company's concessionary demands can only benefit all workers at US Airways.

"The unity that the flight attendants are showing is really important," says Philadelphia utility worker Janine Love. "It's certainly better than what we had with our contract negotiations. That unity is what they need to get what they deserve."

The AFA believes that the purpose of the company's announcement of a shutdown March 25 is to position itself for seeking White House intervention through the use of a Presidential Emergency Board. This way US Airways could achieve an agreement that is "arbitrated and imposed, rather than negotiated and ratified," states a letter from Lynn Lenosky, president of the AFA US Airways Master Executive Council.

Rebecca Arenson and Nancy Cole are members of the International Association of Machinists and work at US Airways in Philadelphia.

LETTERS

Hizballah is Lebanese

I would like to raise a suggestion on the spelling of the Lebanese group Hizballah. The *Militant* has been using Hezbollah, which is the spelling most of the bourgeois press uses. It has a foreign-sounding connotation in Lebanese Arabic. It sounds Iranian, which is exactly why the imperialist press uses Hezbollah as part of its campaign to portray it as foreign inspired. In Lebanese Arabic the sounds are Hizballah, which is why that spelling is better. It is a Lebanese group and not an Iranian one.

Georges Mehrabian
Athens, Greece

Editors note: We will make the change you propose in subsequent issues of the *Militant*.

Edna Griffin, a fighter

Over 150 people attended a celebration of the life of Edna Griffin at the First Unitarian Church on February 26 in Des Moines. Griffin, a civil rights and social activist, died on February 9 at the age of 90.

She was born in Kentucky and attended Fisk University. She moved with her husband to North Carolina but as a Black physician, he was not permitted to practice. They ended up in Des Moines

where they spent the rest of their lives. At the memorial meeting friends and relatives from different generations gave accounts of how Griffin was a champion for social justice. In an unpublished interview, Griffin explained that she had become inspired by the fight to defend the Scottsboro Boys in the 1930s in Alabama. Here a nationwide defense effort was launched to defend several young Black men falsely accused of rape.

In 1948 Griffin and several others entered Katz's Drug Store in downtown Des Moines and were refused service at the lunch counter. Griffin began picketing and sitting in and eventually sued the store. The case went to the Iowa Supreme Court, which ruled that it was illegal to deny service on the basis of one's race. People at the meeting explained that even though Iowa was in the "North" and there were no "colored only" signs, racism and discrimination were still rampant.

In a phone interview, Merle Hansen, a one-time field organizer for the Iowa Farmers Union, said that Griffin was involved in many different struggles. "She wasn't just concerned about the struggle of Blacks. She even attended Iowa Farmers Union meetings with her husband."

Lorena Tinker, whose children were litigants in the Supreme Court case that allowed students to wear arm bands to protest the Vietnam War, said that Griffin was involved in protests against the war and in defense of immigrant workers as well as Native Americans. She was a founder of the Iowa Congress of Racial Equality and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

In the late 1980s, Mark Curtis, a socialist and meat-packer, was framed up on rape and burglary charges in Des Moines. Griffin agreed to support his defense. At a September 1988 defense rally at the Des Moines Civic Center, Griffin, who was then 78 years old, said, "What's this new arrangement? When has there been such concern about sexual abuse, never mind rape, of our young Black women?"

She later told a *Militant* reporter, "I figured out that he is Spanish-speaking and is a great danger because he can communicate with Spanish-speaking workers."

One of the themes of the meeting was that even though Blacks and others had made progress in the past 50 years there was still much that needed to be done and that following in the footsteps of Griffin's activism was what was in order.

Edwin Fruit
Des Moines, Iowa

Mexico protesters

I would like to briefly respond to some issues in the February 28 edition of the *Militant*. The article entitled "Mexico protesters: Release jailed strikers" had the sentence, "Sending police onto a campus is virtually unheard of in Mexico in several decades." The presence of the military on certain campuses of public universities is clearly unconstitutional. That is what the word "Autonomous" means in Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and its branch campuses. One of the gains of the [Mexican] Revolution that was written into the constitution in later years was the explicit independence of this educational institution.

Through the rectory, the presidency once again demonstrated its profound, violent disrespect for the rule of law. The people of this country have not forgotten the massacres during the current administration and are on the lookout for others who know how to fight.

Nevin Siders
Mexico City, Mexico

Learn from history

I was so happy to find you on the

Internet, especially to be able to read comrade Barnes's article [on fascism]. Especially in these times we need to learn from the history and leadership of the proletarian movement. Farrell Dobbs and James Cannon lived through this history. They experienced the growth of fascist movements within the United States.

My father as a young railroad worker took part in the mass demonstration in New York City against the mass fascist meeting being held there. As a youth he recalled to me how important that demonstration was for working people. It is easy to fall prey to the fascist line. This is why it is so key to recall the need for a proletarian orientation. Educating, organizing and mobilizing working people is the best line against fascists. Please keep up the good work. I too continue to struggle.

Tom Siblo
by e-mail

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Florida pickers demand better wages

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

TAMPA, Florida—"We are marching for respect, dignity, and a living wage," said Pedro López. "We are also demonstrating for recognition by the growers of our association."

López, originally from Guatemala, is a tomato picker at Immokalee, southern Florida, and a member of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. He spoke to *Militant* reporters February 25, during an evening dinner and forum at the Church of God here for the dozens of farm workers who had been marching across southwest Florida for nearly a week to win support for their demands.

About 80 farm workers—overwhelmingly immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Haiti, and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean—and a number of their supporters set out from Ft. Myers on a 230-mile trek February 19.

The majority of the workers are tomato pickers in the Immokalee area. The two-week march will culminate in Orlando March 4. There, the workers will try to meet with representatives of the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, the main organization of the bosses.

In 1997, 2,000 of the 2,500 farm work-

ers in Immokalee signed cards saying they wanted the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to represent them in talks with the growers on wages and working conditions. The Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association has refused to recognize the CIW as a union or negotiate with the workers. According to *The Ledger*, published in Florida, "the owners association says it sees the group as an outside party trying to influence workers."

"This is simply a smokescreen," said Samuel Mar, another tomato picker from Immokalee, in an interview in Tampa responding to this charge. "The overwhelming majority of the workers in the Immokalee area belong to our coalition for almost three years now. The bosses are trying to justify their determination to keep the status quo and our superexploitation. But times are changing. We have just demands. During our march we have met thousands, including other farm workers who have joined us and offered their solidarity. And we are not alone. We are not the only ones fighting."

Farm workers receive 45 cents for each couveta, a 32-lb bucket of picked tomatoes. At that rate workers have to pick nearly two tons to make \$50 in a day—a virtually im-

possible task. López, Mar, and other farm workers who have been picking fruits and vegetables for over two decades, say that very experienced pickers working in an excellent field can pick at most 100 buckets of tomatoes a day.

The average yearly wage of tomato pickers is \$8,500. These workers say this pay scale has remained the same for more than 20 years. They are demanding that the minimum piece rate be raised to 75 cents a bucket, just to keep up with inflation since 1978.

The Immokalee workers are also demanding better housing and working conditions, as well as health coverage.

The bosses claim these farm workers make \$9 per hour, which López and other workers say is a lie. "The hourly rate is the federal minimum wage of \$5.15," said López. "But most workers don't want that because you can't make anything. Most of us prefer the piece rate. It's the only way to make anything approaching a living wage. Often, we go to the fields and have to wait for hours for the ground to dry before we can get in. If it rains, there is no work that day. And we don't get paid for any of that, whether on hourly pay or piece rate."

In Orlando, the CIW plans to hold a rally

that will include representatives of the Florida Farm Workers Association and the United Farm Workers. During the march, religious and other groups are collecting signatures on a petition to be presented to Florida governor John Ellis Bush.

The petition is intended to put pressure on the growers' association to meet the CIW's demands, especially on wages. At the same time, it promotes the false view that a wage raise for tomato pickers may be tied to the price of tomatoes at the supermarket. "We as consumers would happily support a tomato industry that pays a living wage and meets certain labor rights, even if it means paying a few cents more per pound in the market," the petition says.

Ray Gilmer, spokesman for the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, said that according to *The Ledger* the wage increase the farm workers demand would cut into the profits of the employers. "Florida farmers also are competing with their Mexican counterparts, who have flooded the American market with inexpensive tomatoes," *The Ledger* article read.

According to a number of the farm workers, the bosses association is still refusing to meet with them. But as Maria, a farm worker from Wimauma, Florida, who came to the Tampa meeting to show her solidarity with the Immokalee pickers, pointed out, "The amount of profit is the growers' problem. We need a living wage." Several farm workers said that they forced one company, Gargiulo, to give a substantial wage raise last year as a result of the CIW's protests and organizing efforts. "That victory can be generalized if we stick together," said Maria, who asked that only her first name be used.

Young people support march

Many young people have turned out to show their support to the march at different spots, and some have joined it for periods of time. In Sarasota, about 100 students from the University of Florida turned out for a solidarity rally. "It has been a long, hard march, and we are all tired. But it has been good to meet so many wonderful people," said farm worker Lucas Benítez at the Sarasota meeting.

"We are all workers," John Grimes, a retired auto worker from Michigan now living in Sarasota, told *The Ledger*. "When one of us doesn't have a voice, none of us has a voice. When employees don't have a recourse, that's when things get bad. We have unions in this country for a reason."

At the Tampa meeting, the local Quakers group, the hosting church, and other organizations that sponsored the support rally and organized housing for the marchers' overnight stay, presented all march participants with new pairs of sneakers and a check of \$2,000 for the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

Most of the farm workers found out for the first time from unionists in Miami at the Tampa event about the March 7 demonstration in Florida's capital, Tallahassee, to oppose the sweeping attacks by the administration of Governor Bush on affirmative action. A handful knew about it already and were planning to go. "This is a cause for all working people," said Mathieu, also from Immokalee, who asked to be identified only by his first name.

A number of farm workers and others also had a chance to speak informally with Karl Butts, a working farmer from Plant City, Florida, who recently returned from a fact-finding trip to Cuba. Butts had set up an information table at the Tampa event, along with an activist in the Cuba Vive coalition in Tampa. They distributed a press release about speaking engagements for Butts that Cuba Vive is organizing in the area, as well as T-shirts and other materials.

"We need a revolutionary change in this country like they had in Cuba," said José Antonio Martínez, an orange picker from Immokalee after reading some of the materials on the small farmers trip to Cuba. "A few of us hold that view now. But more are listening as we expand the struggle."

Meat workers strike in New Zealand

BY COLIN HARDEN

HASTINGS, New Zealand—"If we stick together we can win," said a worker on the picket line outside lamb and venison processor Progressive Meats. Workers walked out February 21 after months of negotiations for a new contract. Both union and nonunion workers are on strike.

The strike is in response to the company's latest demand that the workweek be changed from five eight-hour days, with the weekend off, to four 10-hour days with two rotating days off. This would mean some workers would get a full weekend off only once every 42 working days. In addition, workers would lose their two 15-minute paid breaks, with all breaks on the new roster unpaid.

The workers also rejected the bosses' proposal to introduce a piece-rate system for each carcass killed. This would result in workers not being paid for the first half-hour of any mechanical breakdown.

One worker on the picket line was holding a placard with the words, "Company offer is a worker funded pay rise." He said the company has a complicated pay system in which bonuses are paid to departments deemed to be the most productive, with other departments losing out. The latest proposal is a continuation of this system of playing workers off against each other.

To counter this, workers are demanding a pay raise of 80 cents an hour on the base rate of NZ\$10 an hour. Another worker, who



Striking meat workers at Progressive Meats in Hastings, New Zealand, set up picket line after walking off the job February 21.

has been at the plant 11 years, explained there had been no increase of the base rate for nine years.

The Meat Workers Union represents about 110 of the 170 workers at the plant. The rest are not in a union but have elected three representatives. All workers are meeting together to discuss the company's pro-

posals and their response. Only one worker has crossed the picket line.

The management threatened to take the nonunion workers to court if they went on strike, then said it would lock out all workers once they struck. In the face of the workers' determination, it withdrew these threats.

Some of the meat scheduled to be processed at Progressive Meats has been sent to at least one other plant. Workers at that plant wanted to refuse to process this meat but were told it was illegal to do this. They are now processing it very reluctantly.

The company is under pressure because this is the height of the lamb processing season. One worker expressed what was a common sentiment: "We can hold out longer than he can."

Many of the workers have taken casual jobs, which are plentiful at the moment, picking apples or doing other agricultural work. An indication of the support for the strike is the daily food donations. Passing motorists and pedestrians enthusiastically indicated their support.

Workers on the picket line express support for the meat inspectors, who are also taking industrial action nationwide to demand a 12 percent pay increase. They work in all plants where meat is prepared for export to ensure hygiene regulations are met.

Janet Edwards and Colin Perkins contributed to this article.

Mozambique: flood leaves a million homeless due to underdevelopment

BY T. J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa—The worst floods in half a century have devastated Mozambique and killed hundreds of workers and peasants across Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa. According to Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano, more than a million people have been driven from their homes or otherwise affected by the floods. At press time, while many of the raging torrents had subsided, more rain was forecast and the threat of cholera and malaria was growing rapidly. Hundreds of thousands have lost their homes.

About a third of the corn under cultivation—Mozambique's staple crop—has been destroyed. Crops and topsoil on more than a quarter of a million acres of land has been washed away. Many peasants have lost ev-

erything, including thousands of head of cattle swept away in the floods. Some industrial areas have also been affected, such as Matola, where Coca-Cola has closed its bottling plant. Government officials are forecasting a sharp drop in gross domestic product for 2000 in what is already one of the world's poorest countries.

Official estimates put the number of dead at several hundred. Some aid agencies say the figure is likely to rise into the thousands as bodies stuck in the remnants of huts or in the mud will only become visible when the water level drops.

For more than a week, tens of thousands of working people tenaciously survived by clinging to treetops or on the roofs of buildings as rivers such as the Limpopo,

Continued on Page 5